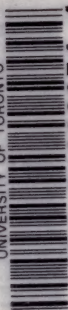


UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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31 (22)

A DAUGHTER OF NEW FRANCE

Being a Story of the Life and Times of
Magdelaine de Verchères
1665-1692

BY
ARTHUR G. DOUGHTY

With a Frontispiece by
HER ROYAL HIGHNESS PRINCESS PATRICIA

And other Illustrations in Colour by

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OTTAWA
MORTIMER PRESS
1916

312863
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TO
HER ROYAL HIGHNESS
PRINCESS PATRICIA

WHOSE NAME IS PROUDLY BORNE
BY ONE OF THE NOBLEST REGIMENTS
THAT EVER FOUGHT IN BRITAIN'S CAUSE
THE SERVICE AND SACRIFICE OF WHICH
HAVE GIVEN IT AN ENDURING FAME

THIS LITTLE BOOK

WHEREIN IS SET FORTH THE ACHIEVEMENT OF
A DAUGHTER OF NEW FRANCE
A CHILD IN YEARS BUT A SOLDIER IN VALOUR
AND RESOURCE

IS WITH PROFOUND RESPECT
INSCRIBED

PREFATORY NOTE TO FIRST EDITION*

THIS little book is written for the sole purpose of helping the Red Cross work of the Magdelaine de Verchères Chapter of the Daughters of the Empire. The entire proceeds of the sale will be placed at the disposal of Madame Casgrain, the Regent of the Chapter. The volume can be recommended to the book-lover on account of the excellence of the illustrations.

A. G. D.

* *The first edition of this work was printed and published at the expense of A. G. Doughty, who donated the whole of the proceeds of the sale to the chapter.*

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MAGDELAINE DE VERCHÈRES
From a miniature by Gerald S. Hayward

A DAUGHTER OF NEW FRANCE

INTRODUCTION

Notre devoir est de travailler jusqu'à la maladie,
jusqu'à la mort

"SOUVENEZ-VOUS des leçons que mon père a si souvent données que des gentils hommes ne sont nés que pour verser leur sang pour le service de Dieu et du Roi."¹

These words spoken by a young Canadian girl more than two hundred years ago seem to have special significance in the year of grace 1916, when the sons and daughters of Canada have gone forth to the blood-stained fields of Europe to uphold the honour of their country and their King. When life and liberty were at stake in the little fort on the St. Lawrence in 1692, Magdelaine

¹ "Relation des faits héroïques de Mademoiselle Magdelaine de Verchères contre les Iroquois" (*Archives du Ministère des Colonies*, F 4, vol. vii, p. 434).

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de Verchères recalled the admonition of her father in order to rally her young brothers to the defence of the lily banner of the Bourbons. That flag has vanished and over Canada sways the symbol of a vaster Empire. From Asia, from Africa, from Europe and from America, thousands have responded to their Empire's call to arms. Many have already surrendered their swords to a Higher Command — *Mort au champ d'honneur* — and many more, alas! will join that silent army ere the sword is returned to its scabbard. Surely the words of Magdelaine, embodying the loftiest sentiments of loyalty and devotion, should be cherished by every true Canadian, for happy is the country, in time of peace and in time of war, whose honour and whose safety are confided to loyal souls.

Magdelaine de Verchères was the product of her age, even as Canadians of to-day are the product of theirs. Happily the spirit of Magdelaine has not wholly disappeared; but there are signs which tempt us to inquire whether the tendency of the twentieth century is not rather to subor-

dinate every other interest to that of self. Is the age in which we live greater than hers? Or have we in the midst of all our progress lost sight of our obligation to that higher entity, the nation? These are questions for reflection, and while pondering over them we cannot do better than to keep before us the words of the child-heroine of New France.

In the story of Magdelaine de Verchères one fact is predominant, the enduring effect of early education. Neither poverty nor the rude life she was forced to lead, could rob this child of noble parents of the lessons she had learned at her father's knee—lessons which sank deep into her heart, strengthening, sustaining and exalting her at the crisis of her life.

Women are naturally more heroic than men. The impulse which governs their action springs from the imagination. In moments of crisis they rise to loftier heights than man because what they undertake does not present itself as a duty but as an aspiration. Counting not the cost, they

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rejoice in any sacrifice which leads to the realisation of their desire. Herein lies the secret of their achievement. And so Magdelaine, entrapped by savage hordes, eluding the grasp of the Indian and the murderous blow of the tomahawk, became inspired. There was no thought of fear, only prompt determination to resist in a righteous cause even unto death. "Battons-nous jusqu'à la mort: remember the lessons our father taught us."

The story of Magdelaine de Verchères leads us to consider the condition of the country at the time of her defence of the fort. The times were indeed strange and throw her achievement into a most vivid light. Savage tribes who had lorded over the continent for centuries were challenging the advance of European civilisation. The Iroquois, most powerful and most ferocious of the native races, were bent on the extirpation of the French colony. Champlain, who in 1608 had founded under the rock of Quebec the first permanent European settlement in Canada, had earned their undying hostility by the assistance he gave

to their Indian enemies. For a time New France was maintained almost solely as a centre for the fur trade and for the enterprises of the missionaries who laboured to convert to Christianity the Hurons and other Indian tribes of the interior. But just when the sufferings of the Jesuit Fathers seemed at last to be bearing fruit, the Iroquois in one terrible campaign all but annihilated the Huron nation. The missionaries were slain on the battle-field or at the stake, the routes of the fur trade were closed by lurking bands of scalp-hunters, and the very existence of the little French posts at Quebec, Three Rivers and Montreal was threatened. The time was ripe for vigorous action on the part of the French King. Troops were sent out from France and with them came Magdelaine's father.

CHAPTER I

LOUIS XIV AND NEW FRANCE

THE year 1665 opened auspiciously for Canada. Louis XIV, then in the flush of early manhood and in the full enjoyment of his kingly power, had resolved to take a personal, nay, a paternal interest in the fortune of his struggling colony. And when the King decided upon any policy it was carried out with all the dignity and splendour which signalised his reign. Nearly half a century had elapsed since Champlain had laid the foundation of Quebec, at the foot of Cape Diamond, and still the entire population of New France was not larger than that of a small town.¹ For years intelligent governors

¹ Quebec was founded in 1608. The population of Canada is now about eight millions. Jamestown was founded in 1607. The population of the United States is about one hundred millions. Whether the slowness of the growth of Canada is attributable to the climate or to the policy of Government, or to both, it is not our purpose to inquire.

through the medium of able reports had pointed out the vast political potentialities of the country and the urgent need of substantial aid to bring about their realisation. But their appeals had fallen upon inattentive ears. In vain had the *parti dévot* in France, steeped in the *Relations* of the Jesuits, urged the young monarch to pursue a course which would bring glory and renown not only to the State but also to the Church. The Court, however, was too much enslaved by the intoxicating pleasures of the moment to bestow any serious consideration upon the possible future of a primeval forest. Now all was to be changed. The sun of the French monarch was to cast its beams upon the time-worn rock of Quebec.

Abundant evidence of royal intervention was soon forthcoming. The outward and visible signs of the power, majesty and splendour of Louis XIV were to be seen and felt in New France; but whether for good or for evil, time alone was to tell. It seems to have been the principal end of Government, as then understood, to mould all

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men to its will, to squeeze all individuality into one uniform likeness. Originality, if it manifest itself in the subject, must be nipped in the bud, and outbursts of genius unless subdued to the conventions of the day must be promptly smothered. The pattern for the New as well as for the Old World was Louis XIV, and everything must bear the impress of his hand. "Whosoever is born a subject should not reason, but obey!" wrote the monarch some time later, and to the bureaucratic mind then, as now, the squeak of the official penny-whistle is imperative. To heed not its squeak is an unpardonable sin.

Canada, however, was still a virgin forest, save for a speck of civilisation. Its natives still wandered through trackless forests and by the margin of unnamed lakes, bowing to no sovereign and acknowledging no law save the uncoded rules of their tribe. They were, moreover, the lords of commerce, from whom alone could be obtained the coveted beaver. The lawless savage was necessary for the subsistence of the country, although his vicious habits had a decidedly

baneful influence. And so from the outset the pursuit of trade and the concomitant depravation of morals created a problem which troubled the State and sorely taxed the spiritual energies of the Church.

The first evidence of the King's paternal affection for the colony was given on the 30th of June, 1665, when amidst the rejoicings of the people and the roar of cannon from Point Lévi and from the bastion of Cape Diamond, M. Prouville de Tracy, Lieutenant-General of all the King's possessions in North America, landed at Quebec. In the train of de Tracy there followed a throng of gay young nobles and men of fashion; and not less important, a number of officers of the famous Carignan regiment,¹ who were to represent the Royal Army of

¹ After the Peace of the Pyrenees in 1659 this regiment was offered to the King and became a part of the French army. In 1665 the German regiment of M. Balthazar and the troops under the command of the Prince of Carignan were formed into a brigade and ordered to proceed to Canada under the name of the regiment of Carignan-Balthazar. On the day of the embarkation of the troops at La Rochelle M. Balthazar died, and the command devolved upon M. Sallières, senior captain. The sombre flag of Balthazar was replaced by the white flag of Sallières and thus the regiment proceeded to Canada.

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France in the New World. Shortly afterwards the new Governor, de Courcelles, arrived with another body of troops, followed by M. Talon, most famous of all the Intendants, with still more soldiers.

The distinguished representatives of the sovereign were received with befitting ceremony at the foot of the mountain path and, headed by the ecclesiastics, wended their way in solemn procession to the church. The Lieutenant-General immediately won the esteem of the clergy by his devout observance of religious exercises. The inhabitants were deeply touched. They felt that Quebec was no longer a lonely, half-forgotten outpost beyond the borders of civilisation, but linked by the tie of sovereignty to a mighty realm, and protected by the most illustrious monarch of the time. Under conditions so auspicious, the people looked forward with confidence to an era of material prosperity, while the ecclesiastics indulged the hope that a triumph was in store for the Church in the conversion of the heathen to the true faith.

CHAPTER II

THE PATH OF THE IROQUOIS

THE pomp and dignity of the Old World were to be reflected in the New; and, to the amazement and delight of the people, courtiers in gay attire, flunkeys in gorgeous liveries, naval and military officers in handsome uniforms, might be seen passing to and from the Château St. Louis. On guard before the Château or drawn up for parade on the grand battery, well-drilled soldiers, bronzed by exposure in the Turkish wars, gave a picturesque touch to the scene, truly gratifying to the popular mind.

Nevertheless matters of grave import were under way; for the mission of de Tracy was to reveal not only the splendour, but the iron hand of France. For a long time the authorities had been convinced that

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no real development could take place within the colony until the aggressive savage was brought to submission.

The introduction of force seemed indeed desirable. For years the wily Mohawks, leaving their villages or "castles," had descended by way of Lake Champlain and the Richelieu upon the French settlements, destroying corn and cattle and murdering and scalping any unfortunates who came across their path. The Indian gave no warning of his approach and disappeared as silently as he came. The people in outlying districts lived in constant fear, for at any time raids might be made on Montreal, Trois Rivières, or even on Quebec.

The first measure of de Tracy was to place obstacles in the way of the Iroquois. With this end in view he sent strong detachments of troops to the Richelieu with instructions to the officers to construct forts at different points of vantage. Sorel and Chambly, amongst others, derive their names from officers sent on this mission. But these were only preliminary measures. The Iroquois were to be taught to respect the

power of France; but neither the hour nor the man had yet arrived.

Too hastily was the first expedition undertaken. With little preparation and no experience of the severity of a winter campaign, de Courcelles set out from Quebec on the 6th of January, 1666, with over five hundred men to chastise the contumacious Mohawks. The path of the expedition was by way of the St. Lawrence, then held in a grip of ice. Each man carried five or six biscuits and a blanket, and the scanty stores for the march were packed on light sleighs "drawn by mastive doggs."¹ A fierce wind swept the river, driving the snow into ridges often over four feet in depth and leaving their path in other places as smooth as glass. "Snow shoes which hath the very form of a Rackett tyed to each foote" greatly impeded their march. To add to their discomfort the frost nipped their fingers and toes, and so from the outset the sufferings

¹ "A Relation of the Governor of Canada His march into ye territoryes of His Royall Highnesse the Duke of Yorke in America" (E. B. O'Callaghan, *Documentary History of the State of New York*, vol. i. pp. 71-74).

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of the ill-fated march began. Still they floundered on through the snow, beating their way in face of the storm, until the shelter of Sillery was reached. Here they slept for the night. In the morning the march was renewed, "each man rubbing his nose and fingers to keep up the circulation." Between Sillery and Portneuf houses were scarce, and they suffered untold torture. Seven miles a day were all they could make. Their progress was more like that of a stranded army struggling to regain its camp, than that of an expedition bent upon punishing a formidable foe to whom wind and weather offered no terror. De Courcelles, "who breathed nothing but the spirit of war," must have realised by this time that a martial spirit was not the only requisite for a winter tramp. He still forged ahead. Many of the men fell in a torpor, and the more robust were forced to drag their less fortunate brethren to the nearest shelter.

On the 6th of January, after ten days' exposure of this kind, they reached Trois Rivières, where Pierre Boucher, the Governor, extended to them the temporary hos-

pitality of the town. The men would fain have tarried, but de Courcelles was eager for the fray, and after two days' rest set his face towards the enemy. Notwithstanding their sufferings, one officer at least was seized with the humorous side of the adventure and recorded his impressions in verse:

“ Etant rendus aux Trois Rivières
 On fait la nique aux cimitières
 On ne pense plus au passé
 Chacun se trouve délassé.
 Le pot bout. On remplit l'écuelle. . . . ”¹

The cold was still intense. After a few hours several men could proceed no further, and were carried back to Trois Rivières. De Courcelles had no thought of abandoning the enterprise but pushed on until, half starved and half frozen, he reached Fort Richelieu at Sorel. One more stage of the journey had been passed, and it was now thought prudent to enlist the services of

¹ Benjamin Sulte, “Le Régiment de Carignan” (*Proceedings of the Royal Society of Canada*, second series, vol. viii. (1902), p. 42).

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some friendly Algonquins to serve as guides to the country of the Mohawks.

From Richelieu the troops marched to Fort Ste. Thérèse. Here the Algonquins found means in the village for a grand debauch and it soon became evident that many days must elapse before any dependence could be placed upon them as guides. The Governor was mortified, but feeling disinclined to tarry, struck out boldly for the Mohawk country. Towards evening on the 9th of February the soldiers were gladdened by the appearance of smoke arising from a settlement about two miles distant, which they believed to be one of the Indian villages. This seemed to be the more probable since "yt evening they did rancounter with a party of the Mohaukes who made appearance of retreating from the French, whereupon a party of 60 of their best Fuziliers were after them, but that small party drew the French into an ambuscade of near 200 Mohaukes planted behind trees; at one volley they slew eleauen French men whereof one was a Lieutenant and wounded divers others."¹

¹ "A Relation of the Governor of Canada," &c.

It was now too late to make a descent upon the village and de Courcelles was obliged to encamp for the night in the neighbouring wood. The Iroquois, however, after their successful encounter hastened to Albany to inform the English of the movements of the French. Early next morning, while de Courcelles was making preparation for the attack, three envoys arrived from Albany to demand by what right the French were invading the territory of His Royal Highness the Duke of York. Then, to his humiliation, he discovered that the settlement he was prepared to pounce upon was the peaceful village of Schenectady, which, established by the Dutch, had recently passed into the possession of the English.

De Courcelles assured the ambassadors that the one desire of his heart was to punish the Indians and offered an apology for his unfortunate intrusion. The explanation was accepted, although the circumstance was made the subject of a protest through diplomatic channels.¹

¹ On the 20th of August, 1666, the Governor Nicolls wrote to de Tracy complaining of "so considerable a force of Forreiners

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De Courcelles was offered the hospitality of the village, which officers and men were most willing to accept. The Governor, however, was well aware that if the men "got within the smell of a chimney corner" it would be difficult to persuade them to leave until milder conditions prevailed. While declining the proffered hospitality of the village, he accepted a certain amount of provisions and remained in the woods and in the control of his men "whome he could now keape from straggling or running away, not knowing where to runn for feare of ye Indians." Thus for a few days "he campt under the blew canopye of the heavens," and then with "a shew of makeynge towards the Castles of the Mohawkes, but with faces about and great sylence and dilligence, returned towards Canada." "Whether a Panick feare, some mutiny, or ye probability of the thawing of the lake, caus'd this sudden retreat, I cannot

under the comand of Monsieur de Courcelle," who "so farre advanct in these His Ma'ties Dominions without my Knowledge and Consent." (E. B. O'Callaghan, *Documentary History of the State of New York*, vol. i, p. 78).

(31)



THE OLD WINDMILL AT VERCHÈRES

From a sketch by Her Royal Highness Princess Patricia

learne, but surely so bould and hardy an attempt hath not hapned in any age. All which vanisht like false fyre," adds the chronicler, "and hath given new courage to their old enemyes ye Mohaukes." But the Indians, being well aware of the presence of the French, followed close upon their heels with vengeful intent. The nephew of de Tracy was killed by them and several of the party scalped. Some perished by the wayside, and when de Courcelles reached the haven of Fort Chambly, on the 8th of March, he had lost sixty of his men and the survivors were in a deplorable condition. Thus ended the first attempt of the French troops to conquer the Mohawks.

The expedition was not wholly without effect. In the month of July, 1666, the Iroquois of the Oneida nation, having learned from the Mohawks, their neighbours and allies, that the French troops had proceeded as far as Fort Orange, in New Netherland, for the purpose of destroying the Indian settlements, sent ambassadors to Quet to consider terms of peace in their own name and that of the Mohawks. They

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were conscious, no doubt, that their villages were no longer safe from attack, and before committing further ravages desired to ascertain the strength of the French forces. Late in the summer the several delegates arrived in Quebec and proposed some kind of truce which it is possible they may have meant to keep. During the progress of the negotiations some of the chiefs were invited to dine at the Château and in the course of the evening reference was made to the severe loss that de Tracy had sustained in the death of his nephew. Thereupon one of the Indians, raising his arm, boldly declared that his was the hand that had split the head of the young man. Amid a scene of disorder the Indian was taken out and promptly hanged and all negotiations for peace abruptly terminated.¹ The French were now more determined than ever to put an end to Iroquois attacks and also to avenge the death of the Lieutenant-General's nephew.

¹ *Mémoire sur les Moeurs, Coustumes et Relligion des Sauvages*
... par Nicolas Perrot, p. 113.

Another expedition was planned to consist of five hundred troops under de Tracy, and five hundred militia drawn from Quebec and Montreal under de Courcelles, with about two hundred Indians of the Algonquin tribe. The Quebec detachment was to be commanded by Le Gardeur de Repentigny, and the Montreal division by Charles Le Moyne and Picoté de Bellestre. In spite of the reverses of the previous spring the fiery de Courcelles still breathed the spirit of war. Perhaps he was smarting under the sense of failure and was anxious to redeem his shortcomings by a brilliant victory. Be this as it may, he refused to wait for de Tracy, and towards the end of September marched out of Quebec. The season was more propitious. Ice, snow, and blinding storm were fortunately absent, but his arrangements were so absurd that his men were doomed to unnecessary suffering. Each man, as in the winter campaign, carried only a few biscuits, while the arrangements made for provisioning the army were so ridiculous as to earn for the officers in charge the title of "grands maîtres

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du jeûne." It so happened that the commissariat was usually either ahead of time or came up a day late, and the troops in consequence were reduced to misery. No poet seems to have accompanied this second expedition, but the absurd arrangements for the march did not escape the chronicler. Early in the month of October de Tracy set forth at the head of the regulars, and, supported by the militia, they proceeded towards the camp of the enemy. The Canadians, versed in methods of Indian warfare, sought a favourable moment to attack. But they soon perceived that they were merely to support the French troops and that initiative on their part was distasteful. This was the first clash between the regulars and the colonials, a clash which in its development had much to do with the downfall of New France. The regulars would not condescend to pursue the Indians into the woods and pick off their men from behind the trees. They preferred to march on the villages in the orthodox fashion and compel the enemy to fight or to surrender. But when the sav-

ages beheld this formidable body approaching they would do neither one thing nor the other. They simply vacated their villages and took to the woods. Onward swept the troops in measured tread to compel the enemy to battle, and great was their surprise to find no trace of human life. With no foe in sight there was nothing left for the troops but to burn the wretched huts. Thus they passed from village to village burning everything in their path, but not once coming in touch with the enemy.¹ The second invasion ended almost as unfortunately as the first. The Indian raids, it is true, ceased for a while, but a more experienced leader and a firmer hand were needed to administer a decisive blow to these cunning and war-like tribes. Both de Tracy and de Courcelles suffered from fatigue and exposure, and both probably deserved credit for their courage and fortitude, if not for their skill, in conducting the

¹ B. Sulte, "Le Régiment de Carignan" (*Proceedings of the Royal Society of Canada*, second series, vol. viii. (1902), sect. i, pp. 25-95); E. B. O'Callaghan, *Documentary History of the State of New York*, vol. i. pp. 69, 80.

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expedition. On their return to Quebec the order was given that four companies of the Carignan regiment should be employed in the garrison at Quebec and that the remainder of the soldiers should be sent to France. De Tracy's mission was ended and he departed, leaving de Courcelles and Talon to carry out the purposes of the King regarding New France.

CHAPTER III

TALON AND THE FRENCH TROOPS

THE Iroquois had been checked though not subdued. Vengeance swift and sure was meditated: but with the caution and cunning of their race they watched and waited for a favourable moment of attack. Talon seems to have been sceptical of permanent results from the punitive expeditions of de Tracy and de Courcelles, and when the Carignan regiment was recalled he hesitated to part with such a well-drilled body of men. On the other hand the maintenance of a standing army was a serious problem, since the revenue from the country was insignificant and the expense to the King was already large.

Talon, a man of resource, submitted a scheme to the Court embracing certain elements of the Roman system of military

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colonisation, whereby the troops could be retained in the country without any appreciable burden to the King. His plan provided for the grant of lands to officers of the regiment in the form of seigneuries, while the men who had served under them were to become their tenants. Thus land would be cleared and cultivated and at the same time disciplined troops would be available in the case of emergency. Under this system a military spirit would be encouraged and preparation in time of peace would have its effect in time of war. As few of the officers had private means, Talon proposed to assist them in the establishment of their seigneuries. Each tenant was to receive a grant of money or provisions during the first months of occupancy. To preserve a military connection between the seigneurs and the Crown, the sons of the seigneurs on attaining the age of sixteen were to perform a certain amount of duty in the garrison at Quebec. The enemy's line of approach was, as we have seen, by the Richelieu, and the Intendant proposed to make the first grants on either side of that

river, known at the time as the Rivière des Iroquois, as well as on the St. Lawrence, between Sorel and Montreal.¹

The plan met with the approval of the monarch, and patents were issued accordingly. In this manner also, lands were provided for new settlers. Thus it came to pass that a number of seigneuries, now old and picturesque villages, sprang up along the accustomed path of the invaders. Still for some time the settlers were but few, and it was obvious that until a steady flow of emigrants should be set up little progress could be made. The Intendant begged for more settlers and still more. In 1669 three hundred soldiers under six captains of infantry were brought over, and for several years every ship from France brought additions to the settlement. At length the King became alarmed, and declared that he did not intend to depopulate France in order to people Canada. If the increase was so desirable it must come from within. It seems singular that only men were sent to the colony: it does not appear to have

¹ *Edits et Ordonnances*, vol. ii. (Quebec, 1855), p. 32.

occurred to the officials to send out whole families.

The suggestion of the monarch raised the delicate question of providing wives for the colonists. The King was called upon to solve the problem, and in this instance as in most he rose to the occasion. Henceforth by royal decree, dated 12th of April, 1670, a large family was to confer a mark of distinction upon its progenitors and to prove a source of emolument. A census was to be taken of the number of children at stated times each year. To the happy father of ten, a pension of three hundred livres was to be paid, and to the proud father of twelve, four hundred livres. Moreover, positions of honour were to be given by preference to those who could boast of the most numerous offspring. Matrimony was to be encouraged and enforced. To the youth who, on or before his twentieth year, took to himself a wife, the sum of fifty livres was paid, and an equal amount to the bride who had not passed her sixteenth year. This amount, known as the King's present, was payable on the marriage

morn, for such was the King's pleasure.¹ The royal scheme provided penalties as well as rewards, since the parents were liable to a fine of one hundred and fifty livres if they did not marry their sons at the age of twenty and their daughters at the age of sixteen.

But however eager the young men might be to comply with the royal command, they could not do so while the fair sex were so hopelessly in the minority. Numbers of girls had been sent from France, but the number of youths in waiting was far greater, and so the Intendant who had previously begged for men, now made humble supplication for prospective brides. In the country at this time were men of various ranks and classes, and the girl who might tickle the fancy of the peasant might not necessarily captivate the scion of a noble house. Neither the King nor his Ministers, with all their experience of feminity, were quite happy in the choice of damsels for

¹ "Arrêt du Conseil d'Etat du Roi pour encourager les mariages des garçons et des filles de Canada" (*Edits et Ordonnances*, vol. i. (Quebec, 1854), pp. 67-69).

New France, or in the manner of transporting them thereto. Neglect in this respect would have defeated the object of the King, had it not been for the tact of the Intendant. Writing to the Minister in 1670 Talon says: "The girls who came from France this year were well pleased with the treatment they received from the officers of the company at Rouen and Dieppe and while at anchor: but they have made loud complaints to me of that which they received at sea, and have assured me that from the moment they set sail they experienced neither civility nor humanity from the officers of those ships, who caused them much suffering from hunger, giving them only a light meal in the morning and in the evening a little biscuit and nothing else. It would, in my opinion, be proper, that persons of their sex and quality should have had a conductor of experience and authority to see that they were given what was necessary. They were writing about this bad treatment to their correspondents, but as far as I could, I have averted the blow because of the obstacle it would have

formed to the plan you are making for sending next year some carefully chosen girls.''¹ To prevent the repetition of complaints a Mademoiselle Etienne was sent over from Canada to accompany the girls on their voyage, and Talon recommended that she be given fifty écus to expend for their comforts.² Apparently her mission was a success, for we hear of no further complaints. Talon had been most energetic in carrying out the project of the King for peopling the country, and had striven to secure those only who were physically fitted for a rigorous country.

Notwithstanding all the efforts of the Intendant to establish the colony upon a sound basis, by encouraging strong, healthy and virtuous settlers, there were some women of frivolous character, and numbers of worthless males among the arrivals. The former were few, but they gave an opportunity for the evil-minded and malicious to cast

¹ Talon to Colbert, Oct. 27, 1667 (*Archives des Colonies*, C. 11, I. (*Correspondance Générale Canada*), vol. ii.).

² Talon to Colbert, Nov. 10, 1670 (*Ibid.*, vol. iii.). Mlle. Etienne was granted 600 livres.

aspersions in far too general terms. William Perwich, the English agent at Paris in 1669, wrote that "what the Gazeteer mentions of four or five hundred women going to America voluntarily, is false," because they were of indifferent virtue, gathered by the officers of the city and transported according to law.¹ La Hontan, equally malicious, says: "The greater part of the inhabitants are free people who have gone out to the country with some little money. Others there were who after having given up the business of war some thirty or forty years ago when their regiment was disbanded, took up that of agriculture. Lands cost nothing to the officers or troops, who picked out uncultivated lands covered with woods, for the whole vast continent is nothing but a forest. The Governor-General gave these officers concessions of three or four leagues with any depth they wanted at the rate of a fief crown per arpent. After the disbandment there were sent from France several vessels laden with women of just

¹ *Camden Society Publications*, 1903, p. 13.

average virtue. With them came a few old duennas, who divided them into three classes. The nymphs were, so to speak, set off one against the other. I am told that the plump were snapped off in preference to the lean because there was a notion that, being less active, they were less liable to give their households the slip."¹

These remarks were not in accordance with the facts. Mère Marie de l'Incarnation, the superior of the Ursulines at Quebec, whose code of ethics was of the strictest, reports that there were some undesirables.² A few of the earliest arrivals evidently did not come up to the standard set by the good nuns. But every precaution was taken by the authorities to preserve the morality of the country. All who came over were required to furnish certificates of character, and only two or three marriages seem to have been solemnised between persons who were not legally competent. The settlers

¹ Lahontan, *Nouveaux Voyages dans l'Amerique Septentrionale*, vol. i. (The Hague, 1704), pp. 11-12.

² *Lettres de Mère Marie de l'Incarnation* (ed. Richaudeau), vol. ii. (Paris, &c., 1876), p. 435.

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were, on the whole, of a higher class than is usually found in the beginning of a country. The proceedings taken in connection with the treatment of girls seem, to this advanced age, to have been somewhat indecorous. But considering the condition of the colony and the urgent need of settlers, even for the safety and protection of those who were already there, we must recognise the fact that extraordinary measures were necessary. The story of the marriage market and the method of dividing the girls into different classes—

“Petiz et grans et beaulx et laidz,”

where each man could find a bride after his own heart, was no doubt true. But there was no other means of disposing of them. Each man on proposing to marry had to prove to the authorities that he was free and in a position to support a wife; if he were not, the girl was placed with a respectable family until the barrier was removed. In the unsettled state of the country it would not have been prudent to have left the girls to their own resources. The criticism on the methods of disposing of them seems, therefore, to be unfounded.

Among the men in the colony some were disinclined to marry—a few for reasons we shall discover later. The confirmed bachelor, however, was a marked man. The arm of the law was invoked against him. He was forbidden to hunt or fish, and it was even suggested to brand him with a mark of infamy. A young man in Lachine who preferred to live a single life and to hunt in the woods at will, was brought before a judge, confessed his guilt and agreed to marry within three weeks after the arrival of the ships, or pay a heavy fine.¹ This sharp reminder of the duty of young men seemed to have had the effect desired, for on the arrival of the ships as many as thirty were married at a time.²

The King scanned the lists of marriages and births attentively and made estimates of the prospective population. In 1666 the inhabitants numbered 3215; in 1672 they had increased to 6705. In 1670 the Intend-

¹ Parkman, *Old Régime in Canada*, vol. ii. (Toronto, 1900) p. 22.

² *Lettres de Mère Marie de l'Incarnation*, vol. ii, p. 435.

ant was able to report that "all the girls who came out last year are now mothers."¹ Nevertheless, the royal calculations sometimes went awry. In 1676 Louis wrote to Frontenac, the Governor: "You ought to attend to the punctual execution of the order I gave Sieur Duchesneau to have a general census of all the inhabitants, of all ages and sexes, prepared, as I cannot persuade myself that there are only 7832 persons, men, women, boys and girls, in the entire country, having caused a much greater number to be sent over within the fifteen or sixteen years that I have had charge of it."²

The Intendant had other troubles besides those involved in attempting to please his autocratic master. At one time he had urged that some girls distinguished for their accomplishments ought to be sent out in order that a tone might be given to society. This was to tread on dangerous ground.

¹ Talon to Colbert, Nov. 10, 1670 (*Documents relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, vol. ix. p. 66).

² *New York Colonial Documents*, vol. ix. p. 126.

Several of the mothers of New France had now marriageable daughters, and the advent of girls bred in higher social circles might ruin the prospect of their offspring. The girls in Montreal were already jealous because the belles of Quebec had the first chance of securing husbands, leaving them no opportunity to exert their charms. Perhaps it was this aspect of affairs which produced the hint, "There is reason to believe that without any aid from French girls this country will furnish more than one hundred marriages next year. I think it is inexpedient to send more, in order that the farmers may marry off their daughters more readily."¹

It will be seen that the Intendant had difficult and delicate tasks to perform. It was the express wish of the King that his "Canadian subjects, from the highest to the lowest should be regarded almost as his own children." The Intendant was "to solace them in all things, and encourage them to trade and industry, and seeing that nothing will better promote this end than

¹ Talon to the King, Nov. 2, 1671 (*New York Colonial Documents*, vol. ix. p. 73).

entering into the details of their households, and of all their little affairs, it will not be amiss that he visit all their settlements one after the other, in order to learn their true condition; performing the duty of a good head of a family, put them in the way of making some profit. Above all, to cause them to have a profound respect for the King."¹

No one could have been found more suitable to carry out these commands, and had Talon remained in the country, or been succeeded by men of similar type, New France might have been spared much of the misery which was brought upon her by base intriguers and embezzlers. Talon served his country and his King faithfully and would use his own means to promote the ends of the state far rather than use the means of the state to promote his own ends. But while he was generous to the people he tried to make them feel that to enjoy the approval of the sovereign they must render themselves worthy of his favour by their own

¹ Talon to the King, Nov. 2, 1671 (*New York Colonial Documents*, vol. ix. pp. 27-28).

industry. To stimulate their efforts he undertook several enterprises at his own expense.¹ The excessive use of brandy was already having a pernicious influence. To offset this he established a brewery in the lower town where wholesome beverages were brewed for home consumption. The brewery was not a commercial success, and in the course of time the building was converted into what was called the Intendant's Palace. It had served its purpose for the time, and its influence upon the morals of the community could not have been nearly as bad as that of the Palace under the régime of the notorious Intendant Bigot.

There was much to occupy the inhabitants during the summer, but in a sparsely settled country the winter months passed heavily. To encourage home industry a hat factory was opened, though it does not seem to have competed successfully with the importations from France. Ship-building was a happier experiment. Bounties

¹ "I have formed shops which have kept busy nearly 350 men during all summer." Talon to Colbert, Nov. 2, 1671. *Archives des Colonies*, C. 11., I. (*Correspondance Générale, Canada*), vol. iii.

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were given on ships built in the colony and a strong effort was made to develop trade. In 1667 a vessel was laden with dried fish, oil, and sawn timber, and dispatched to the West Indies to trade for sugar and indigo.¹ The people were now in a position, if they so determined, to support themselves and to ship the natural products of the country to France in exchange for the goods they required to import. But they lacked energy, and the arrival of ships every spring with merchandise and novelties from the mother country destroyed to a great extent the spirit of independence and enterprise which the Intendant wished to foster. At no time in the history of New France were greater inducements offered to people to develop their resources. Flax and hemp were grown, and women were sent from France to teach the art of weaving.² The King was willing to help

¹ Talon to the Minister, Oct. 27, 1667. *Archives des Colonies*, C. 11, I. (*Correspondance Générale, Canada*), vol. ii.

² There were, in the colony, at the time: 4 armourers, 7 gunsmiths, 16 gentlemen of means, 11 bakers, 7 butchers, 1 button-maker, 1 brewer, 1 brick-maker, 7 hatters, 2 wheelwrights, 5 surgeons, 36 carpenters, 1 charcoal-burner, 3 braziers, 3 chand-

any colonial enterprise, and to show his favour he proposed to have a special coin struck in New France, solely for use in the colonies.¹ This was the first proposal for a Mint in Canada, but two hundred and fifty years were to elapse before the project was realized. Both Talon and Colbert were in favour of the plan, the Intendant claiming that it would prove of the highest utility.

The Intendant had to the best of his ability striven to carry out the royal command, as expressed to his successor "to labour without ceasing, to find every imaginable expedient for preserving the inhabitants, attracting new ones and multiplying them by marriage."²

lers, 6 rope-makers, 20 shoemakers, 8 curriers, 4 nailers, 1 cutler, 1 roofer, 4 drapers, 401 servants, 1 tinsmith, 1 foundryman, 1 sword-grinder, 4 bailiffs, 1 printer, 3 teachers, 3 gardeners, 32 masons, 1 ship-captain, 18 merchants, 27 joiners, 9 millers, 22 sailors, 3 notaries, 1 jeweller, 5 confectioners, 1 furrier, 1 wooden shoemaker, 1 stone-cutter, 3 saddlers, 3 locksmiths, 14 edge-tool-makers, 30 tailors, 3 carpet-weavers, 16 weavers, 8 coopers, 1 turner. Total: 763 persons. *Census of Canada, 1870-71*, vol. iv. "Professions and Trades, 1665-1666," pp. 3-4.

¹ Talon to Colbert, Nov. 10, 1670 (*New York Colonial Documents*, vol. ix. p. 70).

² *Instruction pour M. Bouteroue*, April 5, 1668 (*Archives des Colonies*, B. 1, p. 76).

CHAPTER IV

THE SEIGNEUR AND HIS PRIVILEGES

THE earliest scheme for the colonisation of New France¹ had provided for the introduction of feudalism carrying with it the obligation of military service as an incident of land tenure, for a country without social distinctions and class gradation was hardly conceivable even in the earliest days of the colony. Louis XIV, in his desire to create a Canadian noblesse, was merely following the example of his predecessors, although his motive was not the same as theirs. It was obvious to those in authority that if France wished to retain her foothold in North America, she must be prepared to defend it. At the moment it appeared that the most effective and economical means of

¹The Marquis de la Roche by his commission, dated March 12, 1598, was given authority to create seigneuries, fiefs and baronies, and to grant titles and other dignities.

accomplishing this end would be to divert all interests into channels the most conducive to military efficiency. Yet while this plan secured for New France a superior means of defence, the advantage, it can hardly be doubted, was obtained at the expense of economic development and the cultivation of the arts of peace.

In France, however, feudalism was the outgrowth of great historic changes, the decomposition of an old civilisation, and the creation of new centres of force and new grades of authority and subordination. In Canada it was superimposed. The dominant feature of the old world tenure was lacking, and in the place of the jealous, contentious and oftentimes aggressive noble of France there was the Canadian seigneur, amenable to the decree of the King, the edict of the Council, the ordonnance of the Intendant. The country, it would now seem, was not ripe either for the feudalism of the old world of that day or for the narrow restricted form which was imposed upon New France. Perhaps, after all, this new form was more in accord with the original

idea of feudalism than was that into which it had degenerated in the seventeenth century. What Canada evidently required for many years was vigorous men and women capable of toil and sacrifice, a race whose highest ambition would be to found homes for themselves and their progeny.

But, assuming that the King insisted upon the creation of a superior class, it would have been sound policy to have chosen wealthy men to form that class, or to have endowed others with the means to uphold the dignity of their estate. This was not done. Grants were made to men of slender income who must derive their subsistence from the land, the cultivation of which entailed a heavy expenditure before it could become productive. As labourers were scarce and wages excessive, those who were to be regarded as the governing class were often forced to perform the lowest form of manual labour. Even girls, scantily clad, were compelled to work in the fields. It is true that the King came to the assistance of the more needy and doled out funds on a small scale to those who were willing to become seigneurs. To

La Mothe, an officer of the Carignan regiment, the sum of fifteen hundred livres was given on his marriage, and six thousand livres were set apart for other officers who were prepared to follow his example.¹ Moreover, the King ordained that a limited number of commissions in the Royal Navy should be given to the sons of the seigneurs, of whom others were to be enrolled in the cadet companies of the army. But the severity of the climate and the brevity of the season for cultivation continued to make the state of society poor and the life of the seigneur irksome. The trade with the Indians, forbidden to the seigneurs, seemed to offer an easy road to fortune. For these reasons the Governor, the Marquis de Denonville, sought pecuniary assistance on behalf of St. Ours and other members of the Canadian noblesse whose children, having no other means of livelihood, were in danger of becoming bandits.² Temporary assistance was

¹ *Estat de la dépense*. . . . March 26, 1669 (*Archives des Colonies*, B. 1, p. 170 et seq.).

² Denonville to the Minister, Nov. 10, 1686. *Archives des Colonies*, C. 11, I. (*Correspondance Générale, Canada*, vol. viii. p. 232 of transcripts in the *Public Archives of Canada*).

granted to St. Ours, and before the close of the year appeals were made for other children in a like destitute condition.¹

The Canadian seigneur, however, whatever his financial status, was a man to whom deference must be paid. The want of means on the part of many and their struggle to live up to their position brought a measure of discredit upon the order. "Many of our aristocrats," said the Intendant, "lead what in France would be termed the life of a country gentleman, spending most of their time in hunting and fishing. As they require more expensive food and better clothing than ordinary mortals, and as they do not devote themselves to the cultivation of the lands but only engage at intervals in illicit trade they get into debt and throw out temptation to their children to become coureurs de bois."²

¹ Champigny to the Minister, Aug. 26, 1687. *Archives des Colonies*, C. 11 (*Correspondance Générale, Canada*, vol. ix.).

² Duchesneau to the Minister, Nov. 10, 1679. *Archives des Colonies*, C. 11 (*Correspondance Générale, Canada*, vol. v.).

In 1685 the Governor Denonville wrote, "The noblesse of Canada is of a most rascally description. To increase the number of that body is to multiply the number of drones."¹ In the following year he gave a more sober expression to the same opinion. "I would rather," said he, "have good habitants, for a good habitant who can and will work can get on very well in the country, but gentlemen who do not work can never be anything but paupers."²

Notwithstanding the assistance given to the seigneur by the King he was often placed in a peculiar position. As overlord, it was derogatory for him to engage in commerce. Even by working upon his own farm he was in danger of having himself classed as a vagabond. Labour, during the first half century of French rule, was scarce, and wages were excessive. Servants being in great demand, became independent and left their service on the smallest pretext. The

¹ Denonville to the Minister, Nov. 13, 1685. *Archives des Colonies*, C. 11, I. (*Correspondance Générale, Canada*), vol. vii.

² Denonville to the Minister, Nov. 10, 1686. *Archives des Colonies*, C. 11, I. (*Correspondance Générale, Canada*), vol. viii.

Sovereign Council, the administrative body at Quebec, attempted to deal with the question, and imposed fines and corporal punishment upon delinquents. Drunkenness, however, was beginning to have its effect upon the people, and there was a general distaste for work, and a keen desire to live without it. Canada was passing through a crisis. From 1665 almost to the close of the century, powerful influences such as the traffic in brandy and the fur trade contributed to social disorder and created an exceedingly difficult situation.

A seigneur in France was always a noble; in Canada he was seldom of noble extraction. Occasionally, however, the King granted to the owner of a seigneurie letters of noblesse. It was evidently the intention of the Governor, if not of the King, to confer these distinctions upon men who had rendered signal service to the state. But when in 1690 the then Governor, the Comte de Frontenac, desired to reward the loyal service of François Hertel, afterwards Sieur de Rouville, by letters of noblesse, it was found that poverty might be a barrier to royal favour.

At the age of twelve this boy had gone forth to fight the Iroquois, and had had the misfortune to be captured and carried off by those savages. Upon one occasion an opportunity was given him of communicating with a missionary priest. "The reason that I did not fight until death was because my conscience was not clear." He then describes the torture he had been forced to endure, when one finger was burnt to a stump in the bowl of a pipe, and the thumb of his other hand was severed. "I beg you to bless the hand which now writes to you," says he, recounting the mutilations he had suffered, "but do not tell mother."¹ After his release he lived to render devoted service to the King. When the patent of nobility arrived the usual fee was attached thereto and Frontenac asked that it be remitted on account of the poverty of Hertel. The King was offended. If the Sieur Hertel could not pay for the seal, he was not in the position to support his dignity. If the King had been aware of Hertel's condition, he

¹ Hertel to the Père Le Moine, *Jesuit Relation*, 1661.

would not have issued the patent.¹ True. But if fault there were it lay at the door of the King. The emoluments of the King's officers were ridiculously small and there were few opportunities for them to augment their income by honest means. The letters of noblesse were for faithful service, not for the accretion of wealth. Hertel's career had been a mistake. His code of ethics did not permit him to plunder, neither did he realize that *honneur sans reproche* when clad only in homespun is seldom a passport to favour or preferment. And yet the mistakes of Hertel, oft repeated, are those which build up a true aristocracy in any country.

In the granting of lands to the seigneurs no fixed rule as to extent appears to have been observed. An estate varied from a few square arpents to many square miles. If the seigneuries had been of equal dimensions, with an equal number of habitants upon each, an element of jealousy would have been eliminated. As it was, a large seigneurie might be found with only a few

¹ Collection de *Documents relatifs à l'histoire de la Nouvelle France*, vol. ii. (Quebec, 1884), p. 301.



THE HABITANT PLAYING CARDS
From an old engraving



inhabitants, while a very small grant had to accommodate double the number. As the river was the principal artery of communication in summer and in winter, a water frontage was always desirable. Often the width of the land on the water was quite narrow, although it might extend for miles on the uplands. It can be seen that a definite purpose was served thereby which at the time appeared particularly advantageous. At a later date it gave rise to dispute, and eventually became a contributing cause to the abolition of the seigneurial system. The astonishing rapidity with which families multiplied in New France added to the difficulties arising from this method of land granting. Soon the division and subdivision of the original grant became necessary. Then, as each insisted upon a certain amount of frontage on the river, the holdings became mere ribbons in width, stretching perhaps for miles into the interior, unprofitable and almost useless for cultivation.

The original expectation seems to have been that by this arrangement proximity of settlement would have been assured and

opportunity given for the people to unite in their common defence. But each man naturally wished to be near his own lands and the dwellings consequently came to be strung out for miles along the river, resembling the long street of a straggling village, where one house might be destroyed by the Iroquois before warning had been received by the nearest neighbour. The King was opposed to this method of settlement, and urged that the habitants be concentrated into villages capable of a stout defence. Had roads been opened through the country it is probable that the people would have complied more readily with the royal wishes.

Another object in granting these lands had been to bring the whole area under cultivation as soon as possible. Seigneurs who had received free grants, many of which were well situated, were expected to offer inducements to settlers instead of putting obstacles in their way. Sometimes, however, they either held their lands in hope of a speculative rise, or demanded an excessive *prix d'entrée*. In order to conform to the terms of their concessions they would cut

down a few trees. It was not until early in the eighteenth century that both the seigneurs and the censitaires¹ were forced either to clear and develop their lands or to forfeit them to the Crown.

As a rule, the seigneur received his grant of land under a form of tenure known as *En Seigneurie* or *En Censive*.² As a vassal of the King he had duties to perform to the state. The oath of allegiance must be taken, and he was compelled to render *foi et homage* to the King's representative and to deposit an *aveu* and *dénombrement* of his estate. The *aveu* consisted of a map or a plan showing the situation of the seignury, its boundaries and configuration; and the *dénombrement* gave the number of the habitants and the extent of land under cultivation, and also set forth the judicial powers of the seigneurs. On the death of the seigneur the manor house, with one arpent of

¹ The censitaires, or dependents of a seignury, were generally known as habitants.

² There were six forms of seignorial tenure, distinguished by the terms, *en franc aleu noble*; *en franc aleu roturier*; *en franche aumône*; *en fief* or *en seigneurie*; *en arrière fief* and *en censive* or *routeure*.

land and the mill, if situated within this area, passed to his eldest son; but the revenue from the mill, with the remainder of the estate, was divided in varying proportions amongst all the children.

The seigneur, as we have shown, made sub-grants to his censitaires, who held their grants under the form of tenure known as *en censive*. They occupied a position towards the seigneur similar to that which he held towards the Crown. The habitant upon entering into the possession of his estate rendered, upon bended knee, *foi et hommage* to the seigneur. At stated times he was called upon to make a *dénombrement* giving details of the number of persons upon his lands, the extent of the soil cultivated, the product of his farm, the number of cattle, and other particulars. Another obligation was the payment of *cens et rentes*. The *cens* seems to have been a small annual tax in recognition of the seigneur's direct authority, and the *rentes* were dues paid annually either in money or in kind, or in both. For example, the *rentes* on a farm of one arpent would be twenty sols or one fat

capon, or twenty sols and one demi-minot of grain. Payments were exacted by the seigneur on each mutation in ownership—whether by gift, sale, or inheritance—other than by direct descent.

The seigneur had other means of exacting toll from the censitaire known as banal rights, to which reference will be made in the succeeding chapter. Upon the whole the lot of the seigneur was not better than that of the censitaire. For, though he enjoyed many privileges, he had many obligations, and between him and the censitaire there was the Intendant, who could sweep aside with little formality any act that did not meet with his approval.

The seigneurs were invested with judicial powers, which gave them a certain standing in the community. Grants were made either *avec les droits de haute moyenne et basse justice*, with *moyenne et basse justice*, and sometimes with *basse justice* only. Those who were granted the highest judicial power had authority to erect a prison and gallows upon their property. They could impose the death penalty and all lands held *en cen-*

sive or in *arrière fief* reverted to them in default of lawful heirs. In civil cases their commissions gave them authority to fine, imprison, and award damages. Stray cattle found upon a seignury must be delivered to the seigneur within twenty-four hours, and if, after due notice had been posted in the church, no claimant appeared, they became his property. The control of navigable waters within his jurisdiction was vested in the seigneur, and he could construct ferries thereon. In practice, however, there were few instances of the exercise of the full rights of *haute justice*. A seigneur possessing the degree of *moyenne justice* could try civil cases when the amount involved did not exceed sixty *sols parisis*. Where arrest was made the seigneur must decide within twenty-four hours whether he was competent to try the case. If not he must send the prisoner to the nearest court having jurisdiction. In criminal proceedings the seigneur exercising *moyenne justice* could impose a fine not exceeding sixty *sols parisis*, or money of France. Those whose powers were limited to the administration of low

justice, took cognisance of petty cases not involving an amount greater than sixty sols, and in criminal cases could impose a fine of not more than ten sols.

Every seigneur was supposed to provide a court room, or *auditoire*, and to supply a bailiff and a crier. In the smaller seigneuries, the main room of the *manoir* usually served the purpose of a court. The prison, if there was one, had to be "in a dry place on the ground floor."¹ The unfortunate offender might remain in *durance vile* for a lengthy period, since the only means of bringing pressure to bear on the seigneur was by means of an appeal to Quebec: a slow process. Trial by jury was unknown, neither was there anything in the numerous decrees and ordinances of the time which foreshadowed the *habeas corpus* and that larger constitutional freedom which followed British Rule. In the district of Montreal seigneurial justices were appointed, but in most seigneuries the cases brought to trial were only of a petty nature. The cere-

¹ Doutre and Lareau, *Histoire Générale du Droit Civil Canadien*, p. 135.

monial and dignity of court trials were absent; the proceedings being more of the nature of a conference and the decision merely a mutual agreement, with little reference to the *Coutume de Paris*, the fundamental law of the colony. The failure of the seigneurial system of justice was largely due to the fact that it was unremunerative. In France large fees were derived from the revenues of seigneurial courts and the administrative function added dignity as well as profit to the seigneur. In Canada, where most were poor, the proceedings were largely without profit.¹

Notwithstanding their straightened circumstances, and indeed often on that account, the seigneurs were jealous of their privileges, and exacted all the deference due to them. They had the right of way on the highway, were saluted by the inhabitants, and at the manor-house the habitants remained standing unless invited to take a seat. The mere possession of a seigneurie did not con-

¹ In regard to the rights and duties of the seigneurs, see W. B. Munro, *The Seigneurial System in Canada* (New York, 1907), *passim*.

fer noble status, but the seigneurs regarded themselves as nobles. Meanwhile, poverty increased and with it the thirst for preferment. The half-developed seigneuries and the struggle for existence offered golden opportunities for the speculator. Wealth elbowed its way to the front, whether in the person of the dram seller or of the mechanic; and the successful trader or artisan might look forward to the hour when his title to a seignury would compel that deference and respect to which his previous career had not always entitled him. Titles and distinctions were coveted and intrigued for. Jean Madry, on account of his experience in the barber's art and the excellent services he rendered daily to his Majesty's subjects in Quebec, obtained the King's diploma.¹ Noel Langlois seems to have been an excellent carpenter and to have enjoyed the esteem of his fellow-citizens until he exchanged his hard-earned money for an unprofitable seignury. Then he became indolent, and strutted about in a haughty manner to the amuse-

¹ *Edits et Ordonnances*, vol. iii. (Quebec, 1856), pp. 82-83.

ment of those to the manner born.¹ Men such as these, born to serve rather than to command, brought no credit to the body as a whole, and indeed robbed it of its influence and of the part it should have played in the development of New France. "Every one in the country," wrote de Meulles, the Intendant, "begins by calling himself an esquire and ends by thinking himself a gentleman."²

"Niemand will ein Schuster sein
Jedermann ein Dichter."

To maintain an aristocracy of dignity and influence in Canada would have required statesmanship of more than ordinary wisdom. Conditions were primitive. To raise from the soil sufficient for subsistence and to render their dwellings safe from attack were the main tasks of the inhabitants. The acquisition of the fortunes which might give prestige would demand years of labour.

¹ Duchesneau to the Minister, Nov. 10, 1679. *Archives des Colonies*, C. 11, I. (*Correspondance Générale, Canada*), vol. v.

² De Meulles to the Minister, Nov. 4, 1683. *Archives des Colonies*, C. 11, I. (*Correspondance Générale, Canada*), vol. vi.

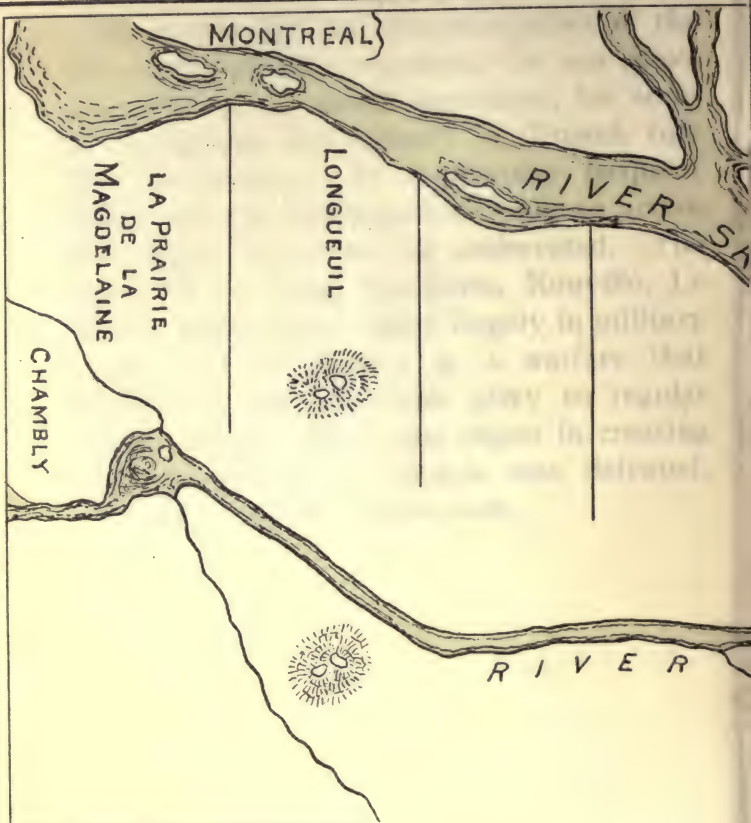
The King, who was kept informed of the smallest details regarding the colony, must have been well aware of the situation, but did little for its relief. After a time he gave his sanction to the participation of the seigneurs in trade, which hitherto would have involved loss of rank. But it was an empty privilege. The successful trader was a man with capital and experience, both of which were lacking to the seigneurs. Robbed of the dignity which belonged to their position, the seigneurs struggled manfully to uphold the traditions of their order. The struggle was bitter. The parvenu and would-be noble could ride on horseback while the seigneur often trudged by the wayside. Thus it came about that the aristocracy which should have become a powerful ally of the state in the formation and preservation of lofty ideals only half fulfilled its mission. But its failure was not due to the shafts of envy or the darts of malice. It was enfeebled by a more subtle enemy which had crept into its ranks—

βαρυστία.

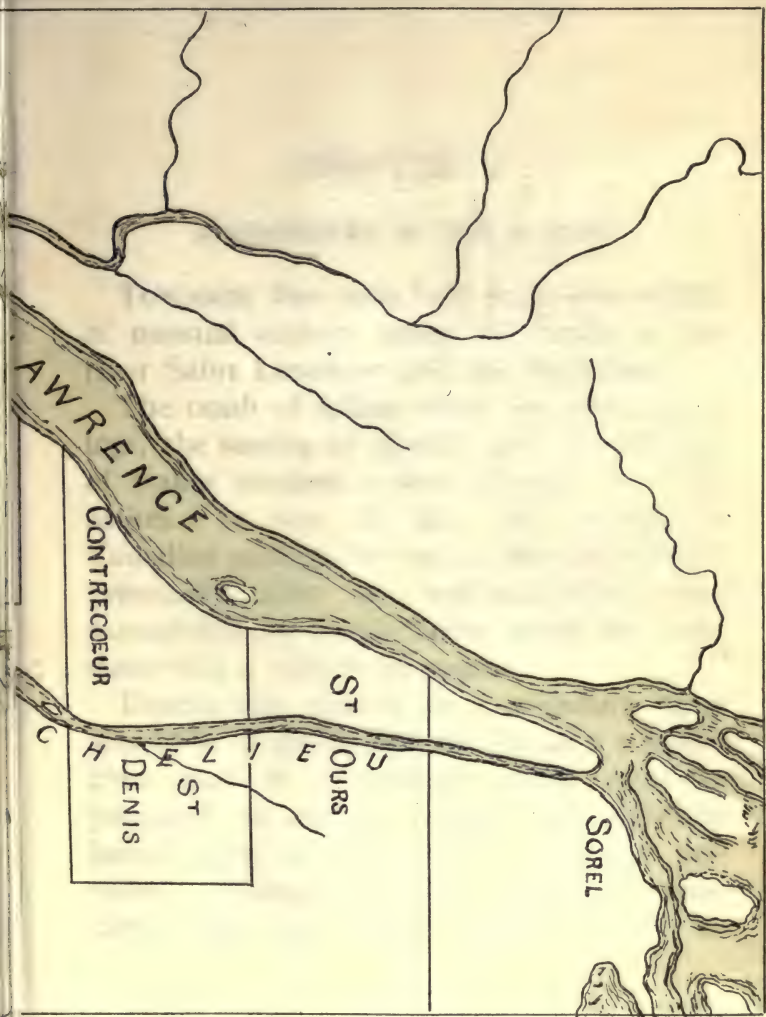
But if, through the mistaken policy of the King, the Canadian gentleman did not prove successful as a landed proprietor, his service during the first century of French rule was considerable. In combating frequent raids upon the settlements he took an active part which should not be underrated. The names of St. Ours, Verchères, Rouville, Le Moyne, Repentigny, figure largely in military annals, and as experts in a warfare that would have brought little glory to regular French troops. While one object in creating class distinctions in Canada was defeated, another, it may be, was served.

THE ST. LAWRENCE
AND THE RICHMOND
BAY
MONTREAL





THE ST LAWRENCE
AND THE RICHELIEU
BETWEEN SOREL AND
MONTREAL.





CHAPTER V

A SEIGNEURY IN THE MAKING

TOWARDS the year 1670 there were scenes of unusual activity along the banks of the river Saint Lawrence and the Richelieu.

The crash of falling trees, the squaring of logs, the sawing of planks, and the pointing of stakes marked a new advance of civilisation. It was, in fact, the making of Canadian society, for out of the chaos would eventually arise the well-appointed home surrounded by fertile lands which we associate with a seigneurial manor.

During the making of a seigneurie there was little to distinguish the life of a seigneur from that of a habitant. Both must be prepared to endure fatigue and exposure before even a rude shelter could be provided. A seigneur upon receiving his title-deeds from the King usually found his

estate to be merely a part of a vast forest, and the only means of communication with any centre of population to be by the river. He could not be certain of the exact boundaries of his lands since no surveyor had yet run his lines through that unbroken wilderness. If his grant adjoined that of a neighbour the division on one side might be roughly defined. Boundary disputes were only too likely to arise later. For the present the all-important task was to select a site for a manor house.

Then began the difficult and oftentimes dangerous task of laying waste the forest. The means of removing fallen trees were primitive and consequently slow, and the cunning savage was ever ready to pounce upon an unprotected worker. Labour in the forest was therefore divided. While some swung the axe, others, musket in hand, patrolled the scene of operations. As soon as the first house was finished it was surrounded by a palisade, beyond which a broad open space was cleared, so that no immediate cover might be available for the foe. The height of the palisaded walls was from fourteen

to sixteen feet, and the entrance to the enclosure was in the centre of the wall facing the river. The manor house was the first building constructed. It was large enough to accommodate all the inhabitants of the place, though their quarters might be small. Then, gradually, separate homes for the farmers, store-houses for provisions, and barns and outbuildings for cattle were erected. When stones suitable for the purpose could be gathered, a mill provided with loop-holes, which could be defended as a last resort, was built in an angle of the square. A patch of ground within the enclosure was placed under cultivation, and the inhabitants of the little fortified village were ready to take their part in the development and defence of the colony.

Then the men took up their task of attacking the forest and bringing a larger area under cultivation. The men were not alone; the women bore their share of the burden with right good-will. There was much to be done. The summers were all too short and the winters seemed interminable. Between seed time and harvest preparation

must be made for the winter months. A quantity of wood must be cut and dried and drawn within the fort; later on, grain and roots must be stored, and a hundred other duties attended to before winter should lay its grip over the land.

In the course of time lands were cleared at a considerable distance from the palisaded fort. For the protection of the workers in the forest soldiers were occasionally sent from Quebec to the districts where the Iroquois were particularly active. In times of comparative peace, however, the watch from the fort was considered sufficient. But frequently when least expected the boom of a cannon would make known the approach of the enemy. This preconcerted signal was taken up by the next fort and passed on, while all flew to arms. When for a long period no such alarm had been given the men might grow careless and leave their muskets at a distance from their work; but they were always liable to pay toll with their scalps before any concerted action could be taken by their fellows. These were the perils which

were endured in the making of a seignury on the path of the Iroquois.

At first it was possible for the seigneur and his people to live within the enclosure of the manor house. But as time passed and families increased its bounds became too narrow. This, and the opening of more lands for cultivation, made it necessary—even though not entirely safe—that new homes should be built for the habitants at a distance from the seigneurial residence. Sometimes the change did not add to the comfort of the women folk. The seigneur enjoyed certain prescriptive rights known as banalities. The censitaires to whom he had granted land were bound to take their grain to the seigneur's mill, and to bake their bread in his oven. If the seigneur did not own a mill his people were compelled to carry their grain to a still greater distance. The banal oven was a sore trial to the housewife. The obligation of using it was at all times irksome. Many a woman after facing a winter storm and floundering through the snow found, on arriving at the

seigneur's oven, that the dough was frozen hard. On other occasions the baker had too many batches to bake and a second journey became necessary. Vexatious delays occurred also in the grinding of corn. At one time the mill was out of order, at another the quantity to be ground overtaxed its capacity. The miller was not always honest and sometimes failed to deliver the just amount of flour. For both grinding and baking a toll was exacted, which, taken into consideration with the inefficiency of the service, often became a burden. These conditions were not universal, for the seigneur's mill and oven were frequently within a reasonable distance of the settlers. The people in the immediate vicinity of a fort enjoyed exceptional privileges. Phillippe de Chambly, to mention one instance, had an estate adjoining Fort St. Louis. He built a substantial stone house, but was not under the necessity of building either a mill or chapel, since his vassals could make use of those within the fort.

With few exceptions the children of the settlers received little instruction beyond

that which was imparted to them by their parents. It is remarkable under the circumstances how many of the girls wrote a good hand and composed a good letter. The mothers of New France deserve high praise for their sacrifices of time and patience in accomplishing this end. Possibly the wives of the seigneurs may have found an opportunity during the winter days to instruct the children of the tenants. There were no regular schools. The staff of the clergy was slender, and was unable, except at irregular intervals, to minister even to the religious needs of the people. The curé led a laborious life. In summer, paddling his canoe, he passed from place to place, spending here a day and there a day, generally as a welcome guest. In winter he tramped on snowshoes over the same route or found a seat in the sleigh of a habitant. His pittance was small, yet he found means to relieve many a case of distress. Though a severe moralist, he seldom failed to make himself beloved. The visit of a suregon was even more rare than that of a curé. For years there was only one qualified sur-

geon in the colony. He travelled, apparently at his own cost, from Gaspé to Montreal, and perhaps beyond. His patients were numerous, his fees insignificant. In Montreal and Quebec the barbers claimed some knowledge of the healing art, and no doubt were quite equal to dressing minor wounds whether inflicted by their own hands or by others. But the mothers of Canada, especially in the country, were probably better physicians and surgeons than the barbers, for their children generally thrived and bubbled over with health, notwithstanding the absence of the apothecary, the doctor, and the patent medicine man.

There was much to occupy the men, all the year round.¹ Hunting and fishing were never out of season. The Saint Lawrence yielded abundance of eels which were salted and stored for the winter's use. The woods provided timber both for building and for fuel; and the splitting of shingles, which

¹ At different periods they were given a certain amount of military training. To encourage them "in manœuvring and firing correctly on Sundays and holidays," the Intendant offered swords as prizes. Talon to Colbert, Nov. 10, 1670 (*New York Colonial Documents*, vol. ix. p. 69).

were constantly required in Quebec, gave profitable employment. Within a few years after establishing himself upon a farm, the habitant was able to support his family by his own industry. Clothing, however, was almost a luxury, for the manufacture of homespun was not yet general in the colony. It frequently happened that children, although well fed, ran about almost nude. But the good king, the "Universal Provider" of the colony, who had sent over the mothers and found them homes, cattle and food, was now asked to supply little socks and pants to hide the nakedness of his dear children. In due course we find the Intendant making gifts of these and sundry other articles in the name of his Royal Master.

It should not be assumed, however, that votaries of the goddess Fashion were wanting in Canada. If the habitants of the rural settlements had difficulty in procuring the garments of necessity, there was a miniature *beau monde* at Quebec which gave ready welcome to the more elaborate productions of the sartorial art. The merchants of the mother country, finding a

more ready market for articles of personal adornment than for implements of trade, quickly changed their tactics and became eager to introduce into the New World the vogue of the Old. The tradesmen of Quebec were thoroughly in sympathy with their brother merchants beyond the sea, and on the arrival of the annual ships the shops in the lower town were decked out with choice brocades, laces, feathers, ribbons and trinkets, all of which the ladies were respectfully invited to inspect. The models as well as the fabrics were usually a year old, but the people were content. A merchant writing from La Rochelle says: "Of ribbons, laces, snuff-boxes, watches and jewels, there was never enough shipped, although they were sold at four times their value."¹ The fashions and novelties of France sorely tried the patience and the pocket of many an already impoverished head of a family. Many a good burgher's wife embarrassed her husband by the purchase of gowns fit only for a duchess, and many an honest artisan

¹ "Commerce de l'Amérique Française" (*Public Archives of Canada*, M. 133, p. 43).

in his desire to do credit to his spouse was forced into clothes which produced the simulacre of a coachman rather than of a *gentilhomme de France*.

The standard of fashion was the Château St. Louis and splendid opportunities were found for the display of the latest modes at the balls which were given by the Governor. It sometimes happened that the Governor had a daughter. Then the girls of Quebec were in ecstasy and vied with each other in all that pertained to feminine apparel. What was most important, a chance was given the girls to prove beyond dispute that fine clothes could add little to their personal charms. Sometimes a husband was found by this means. The Canadian girls were lithe and supple and of good figure. In dress they displayed good, even if extravagant, taste. On the street they usually wore long cloaks of bright colours. They were always well shod and wore their hair according to the fashion in France. At balls and even on promenade they carried attractive fans made of the feathers of the wild turkey. "All the fashions, except rouge,"

wrote La Tour, "come over regularly in the annual ships."¹ The exception referred to by the worthy priest is significant since it furnishes proof positive and overwhelming that the cosmetics of the chemist were not needed to add charm to the loveliness of the daughters of New France.

The gaiety of the Château, although welcome to the youth of Quebec, was viewed with some concern by the ecclesiastics. The members of the clergy looked askance, not without reason, at the low-cut dresses and bare arms of the inhabitants, at the *fontanges* worn in the hair by women of distinction, and at the trinkets and ribbons which adorned their corsage.² Neither did the "immodest curls" of the belles of New France escape censure. The people were rebuked and threatened, and it was even proposed to enact a law prohibiting the importation of lace, brocades, ribbons and jewellery. Denonville,

¹ La Tour, *Mémoires sur la vie de M. de Laval*, p. 175.

² Mandement of Bishop Laval, Feb. 26, 1682, and Pastoral Letter of Bishop St. Vallier. *Mandements des Evêques de Québec*, vol. i. (Quebec, 1887), pp. 106, 172, 184.

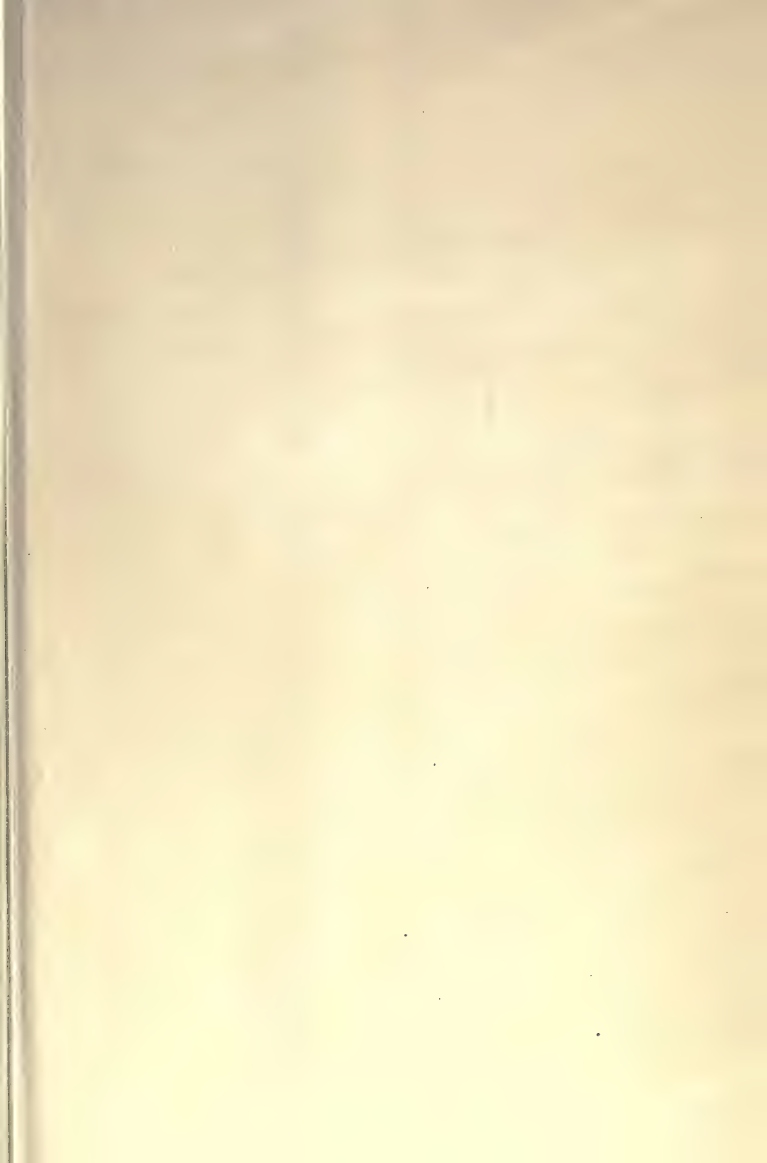
the Governor, who could make or mar the fashion, was advised to set a good example by not allowing his daughter to dance except with persons of her own sex. This was asking a great deal. Whether the rules were relaxed, or whether the young lady was determined to enjoy herself in her own way, we are not told, but balls continued at the Château.

Gossip travels apace even in a new country, and the farmers who carried their shingles from the seigneuries to Quebec brought back glowing, if not always accurate, accounts of the gay life in the capital. And so the news was passed from door to door, the many different versions forming subjects for discussion and adjustment during the winter evenings. Sometimes the seigneur and his family or the censitaire and his family paid a visit to Quebec when the ships arrived. The wise man left his women folk behind; but it often happened that the women had the deciding voice. The most attractive spot in the town was naturally the mart, where the wares were displayed. Purchases

were made which proved a source of gratification to the possessors, and of envy to those who had been left behind, at least until the arrival of the next ships gave them an opportunity for revenge. Canada was still in the making, extravagance and poverty walked hand in hand, and a long time was to elapse before thrift became general.

The habitants, as they were rather proud of calling themselves—the term conveying the idea of fixed possessors of a stake in the country—were for the most part simply dressed. The men from the district of Quebec could readily be distinguished by their red tuque, while those from the neighbourhood of Montreal wore blue. However poorly the girls might be clad, their hair was always carefully dressed and adorned with an aigrette.

There were some curious customs which appear to have been universal in the colony. For example, a guest was provided with a silver fork and spoon, but he was required to bring his own knife. At a later date this peculiarity annoyed the British officer, who,





THE ROUND DANCE OF THE CANADIANS
From an old engraving

arriving at a house unprepared, was compelled to resort to his pocket knife.¹ From very early days there were excellent silversmiths in Canada, and silver forks and spoons and dishes were imported, and in a few cases gold plate was found in the seigneuries. But no one seems to have thought it desirable to supply any quantity of knives.

Civil holidays in the colony were but few. The 1st of May and St. Martin's day were generally observed. On the former the inhabitants assembled at the *manoir*, and, amidst the rejoicings of the children, planted a may-pole in front of the house, while the older folks indulged in gossip and partook of the good cheer offered by their overlord. On St. Martin's day pleasure was always mingled with business. Then it was that the people were called upon to pay their annual dues known as *cens et rentes*. Early in the morning they started out, some in carriages and some on foot, bringing with them the tribute exacted by the terms of their tenure. On a farm of one hundred and

¹ *Knox's Historical Journal*, vol. ii, p. 236.

sixty acres the *cens* would amount to about four dollars, and the *rentes* to half a minot of wheat per arpent or its equivalent in eggs or capons. The farmer tendered the whole in kind if he could, and this was often a matter of argument. After their duties were satisfactorily performed, the inhabitants enjoyed the hospitality of the seigneur, and exchanged gossip over a friendly pipe, of which the girls were not unwilling to take a puff. Then as the shades of evening fell they returned to their homes and the fête was over.

But *le lendemain de la fête* oftentimes revived other than pleasant memories. The gay, easy life, as it was pictured, of the fortunate inhabitants of Quebec, the elegance of the seigneurial manor contrasted with their own rude homes, the exactions of the seigneur, all combined to create a feeling of dissatisfaction, especially amongst the young. The feeling became more intense as it was pondered over and voiced in animated discussion at their games of cards. Youth brooks no restraint and abhors all forms of servitude.

Other potent influences, moreover, were beginning to be felt. Some of the older generation remained pastoral still, following the plough or gleaning in the fields with the simplicity of olden times, well content with the increase of their labour. To such as these titles and honours offered no temptation. They looked to heaven for recompense both in this world and in the world to come. This little band, of whom the world took no account, were nevertheless the mainstay of the colony. But one must not picture them as morose or stolid. On the contrary they were generally cheerful and entered into the simple enjoyment of the young.

The more thrifty, whose fortune, such as it was, had been built up sou by sou through much self-denial and bodily suffering, contemplated with pride a well-stored granary and a goodly herd of cattle. Considering the hardships through which they had passed, surely this was a worthy heritage to bequeath to their children. But the rising generation had little remembrance of such things and chafed in petulant mutiny against their en-

vironment; for into the heart of youth had passed that insidious enemy, discontent. Nor is this surprising. Periods of forced activity were followed by long intervals of seclusion and loneliness. And in their isolation and deep loneliness the penumbra of their own existence seemed to have fallen upon all creation. The narrow bounds of the seigneury, the drudgery of digging and ditching, the restraint of parental authority and the leaden hand of poverty, galled and oppressed them. Beyond them in striking contrast were illimitable forests peopled by the picturesque savage to whom restraint was unknown, who bowed to no seigneur nor sovereign. The call was insistent and they were gradually drawn within its influence.

CHAPTER VI

ROYAL GOVERNMENT

SUCH was the social basis on which the colony was constructed, a colony which, if wisely guided or wisely allowed in reasonable measure to guide itself, might have become truly a New France, developing on industry and commerce, with side lights of wild adventure and forest savagery. In such a state some of the picturesqueness of the mother country might be wanting, but many of its defects would be avoided. Very rarely, however, has a state been designed on advanced views: the more history is studied the more one is compelled to recognize the truth of the Swedish chancellor's observation, "*Quantula sapientia mundus gubernatur!*" The thing that is before the eyes is the thing that is copied, whether time and circumstance justify the copying or not. To consider what new

times or strange circumstances require is a task sometimes assumed by the philosopher, but very seldom by the practical statesman, who is generally only too happy if he can maintain the status quo. The Emperor Augustus had a very simple definition of the good citizen: it was he whose disposition was "*Quieta non movere.*" It is not surprising, therefore, to find that, with all the sagacity of Richelieu and Mazarin and Colbert, their only thought was make New France a diminished model of Old France. Even so, they were not quite true to that intention; for they cast restrictions on the trade of a colony that had no parallel in European France, and practically handed over its commerce to one trading corporation after another. From the beginning New France was restricted, whilst her people were not inclined to bear restraint as patiently as their ancestors.

When, therefore, Louis XIV decided to take the government of the French colony in Canada under his more direct personal supervision, he found it necessary to adopt measures which would inspire confidence in his administration. Talon, his chosen repre-

sentative, was instructed to cause Justice to reign and to procure for the inhabitants peace, repose, and plenty.¹ In ordering an investigation in 1663 into conditions in Canada the King had declared, "Up to the present there has been in the colony no regular system of justice the authority of which was universally recognised, and through the weakness of character of those who were charged with rendering justice, the judgments which were pronounced were generally unexecuted."² To provide an instrument for the execution of justice of sufficient authority to ensure the enforcement of its decrees, and an administrative body which could be trusted to use its power in restraining any tendencies of the Canadian people to depart from the rules laid down for their guidance by the royal will, the Sovereign Council was created.

The creation of the Council was a prudent act of statesmanship. For a hundred years this body was to exercise a powerful influence

¹ Colbert to Talon, April 5, 1666 (*New York Colonial Documents*, vol. ix. p. 39).

² Royal Instructions to the Sieur Gaudais, Special Commissioner to investigate conditions in New France, May 7, 1663. *Edits et Ordonnances*, vol. iii. (Quebec, 1856), p. 25.

on the progress of the colony. It was composed of the Governor and the Bishop, and of five other members appointed by them. The local syndics had no longer, as in earlier days when the colony was more largely in the control of chartered companies, a part in the election of councillors. They henceforth must depend for support upon those above them. At the same time the Council furnished a check on any tendency towards independence and absolutism on the part of the Governor.

The new institution was destined to prove, on the whole, a satisfactory organisation. Its earliest acts, however, were not creditable since the arbitrary powers that had been assumed by the Governor were arrogated by the Council. Amongst the first councillors chosen were two men named Villeray and Bourdon. On the day before election, a certain Dumesnil who had gathered information against these men in connection with frauds practised on the Company of One Hundred Associates, requested that they be not appointed. At the second meeting of Council, Bourdon, now Attorney-General,

represented that Dumesnil had carried off papers belonging to the Council, and appointed Villeray, the other suspect, to recover them. With ten soldiers Villeray forcibly entered the premises of Dumesnil, broke open the place of deposit, and secured the papers. By these means the exposure of Bourdon and Villeray was suppressed.¹

A glance at the judgments and decrees of the Sovereign Council reveals the fact that the people were ruled with a rod of iron. In many instances, it is true, barbarous features of judgments based upon the laws of France were eliminated. Thus Jacques Bignon, convicted of murder, was to be conducted through the streets, half clad, to the doors of the church, there to beg pardon for his sin. Then his offending hand was to be cut off and nailed to a stake, after which he was to be conducted to the gallows and hanged. The hand, however, was not severed until after his execution.² A miller found

¹ Cahall, *The Sovereign Council of New France* (New York, 1915), p. 24.

² *Jugements et Délibérations du Conseil Souverain de la Nouvelle-France*, vol. i. (Quebec, 1885), p. 486.

guilty of stealing wheat was condemned to death. But beating, branding upon the shoulder, and the loss of his occupation were the extent of his punishment. For forgery, a man escaped the gallows by serving three years as a servant, after he had spent some hours in the pillory with a placard on his breast inscribed "Author of False Notes."¹ For brutal acts men were condemned to be shaved and beaten with rods and then sent to serve nine years in the King's galleys. For swearing and blasphemy there were various degrees of punishment—the cutting of the upper and lower lip, branding on the cheek, and, for persistent offenders, the removal of the tongue.

The activities of the Council were not confined to the exercise of strictly judicial functions. Various measures of domestic legislation were enacted by it. Agriculture, upon which depended the permanence of the colony, was encouraged and protected by prudent regulations. The crops of the farmers during the first five years of cultivation were to be exempt from tithes,

¹ *Ibid.*, vol. iii. (Quebec, 1887), p. 442.

and grain could not be seized for debt while at the mills in Montreal or Quebec.¹ Although Talon had a well stocked farm and a fine breed of cattle, stock raising does not appear to have been very well understood by the farmers. Cattle were dear, but occasionally, when the farmers made known to the Intendant their wants, an ox or a cow would be added to their herds as a gift from the King. The indifference and improvidence of many of the censitaires retarded progress. Weeds were allowed to grow unchecked in the fields, until the Council found it necessary to impose a heavy fine upon farmers who did not cut the thistles on their property before the end of July.² Many habitants sold their wheat as soon as it was ripe, being obliged afterwards to buy grain for seed at a higher price.³ The speculator in grain, however, found it difficult to escape

¹ Cahall, *The Sovereign Council of New France* (New York, 1915), p. 218.

² "Arrêt du Conseil Supérieur de Québec," June 20, 1667. *Edits et Ordonnances*, vol. ii. (Quebec, 1855), p. 40.

³ *Jugements et Délibérations du Conseil Souverain de la Nouvelle-France*, vol. iv. (Quebec, 1888), p. 542.

the vigilance of the Council. When complaint was made that the merchants were refusing to take wheat in payment of debts except at very low rates, they were forced to accept it at a price fixed by the Council at four francs per minot.¹ But the Council was not always eager to act when its interests were in opposition to those of the farmers. By a royal decree of 1684 each seigneur was enjoined to build a grist mill upon his estate for the accommodation of his vassals. Several of the Councillors were seigneurs and the decree was not made public until several years later. Decrees enjoining the seigneurs to clear their lands within a reasonable time under penalty of forfeiture to the Crown were not enforced, and for nearly half a century the average annual increase of land brought under cultivation did not exceed one thousand acres.

The Council also enacted legislation applying to the towns. It laid down rules for the management of the weekly market. In 1676 provision was made for an annual meeting of the chief inhabitants to decide the price

¹ *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 549.

of bread.¹ It passed several regulations regarding sanitation. Scavengers were appointed to gather refuse, and the inhabitants were forced to keep the streets in tolerable order. Many devices were adopted for the prevention and extinction of fire. In primitive times the citizen was required to proceed on the first sound of the bell to the scene of the fire, carrying leather bucket, hatchet and iron hook. The good housewives found the leather buckets particularly useful in bringing water from the well, and in the course of time they became worn-out in this service. The King was asked to supply new ones to the extent of two hundred crowns. In a similar manner the iron hook was found serviceable by the men. The Council had to provide a fresh supply, which, however, were kept at the Château, the Palace, and other stated places. This method may have prevented the disappearance of the buckets and the hooks, but it often gave the fire a good headway. On one occasion certain of the inhabitants were given permission to import from France,

¹ *Edits et Ordonnances*, vol. ii. (Quebec, 1855), p. 72.

at their own cost, a pump for throwing water upon the houses "after the Dutch fashion." Possibly it proved too costly, for the inhabitants still clung to the leather buckets, and we hear no more of the Dutch contraption.¹ These methods for fighting fire could be adopted only in the larger settlements. In the country parishes the fire generally took its course.

Mendicancy was a source of disorder in the towns which for a time gave the Council much concern. "Begging," says the Intendant, very ungallantly, "was introduced into Quebec in 1673, by five women."² Being only a male he may have found it convenient to place the onus upon the fair sex, since

"Adam muss eine Eva haben,
die er zeiht was er gethan."

But even if women had the distinction of being the first professional beggars in the colony they did not long enjoy the monopoly.

¹ *Jugements et Délibérations du Conseil Souverain de la Nouvelle-France*, vol. iii, p. 591.

² *Archives des Colonies*, F. 3 (*Collection Moreau St. Méry*), vol. iv., pt. ii., p. 806.

The men quickly followed their example, joined by youth of both sexes. In 1674 the Sovereign Council issued an edict requiring all mendicants to leave the vicinity of Quebec within eight days, to return to their homes, and to support themselves by their own labour. A fine was imposed upon anyone who gave alms at his door. This order seems to have given temporary relief to the inhabitants of Quebec, but to have increased the burdens of outlying parishes. In 1682 the beggars returned in force and built huts upon the Plains of Abraham, which became the scandalous abode of vagabonds. The five had now increased to three hundred. More edicts were issued. For a first offence the pillory was threatened, and flogging for a second. The mendicants became aggressive and threatened to pillage the homes of those who refused to accede to their demands. Once more the Council took up the question, and a board was appointed to determine who were the deserving poor. A relief committee was organized.¹ Two women were

¹ *Jugements et Délibérations du Conseil Souverain de la Nouvelle-France*, vol. iii (Quebec, 1887), pp. 219-223.

given authority to solicit alms and food, and a third followed with a basket to collect the donations. The proceeds of these daily rounds were distributed to the needy; and thereafter a healthy beggar who was found in the neighbourhood received a sound thrashing.

The Council devoted its attention to commercial affairs. In the regulation of commerce with France benevolent paternalism went so far as to inquire into the prices paid by the merchants for their goods, and also to determine the profit they should receive. On the arrival of a vessel from Europe the captain took the invoices of his cargo to the Council, which, after imposing a duty of twenty per cent. and declaring the profit the merchant was to receive, allowed the cargo to be released.¹ If the prices on the invoices were considered excessive, the books and papers of the merchant were scrutinised. Sometimes it happened that the Intendant, whose jurisdiction was both judicial and ad-

¹ *Jugements et Délibérations du Conseil Souverain de la Nouvelle-France*, vol. i. pp. 93, 145.

ministrative, intervened, and suspended acts which were not in accord with his own ideas of public policy.¹ Foreign merchants who brought goods into Canada were not allowed to sell them at retail, except between the 1st of August and the end of September, and they were forbidden to have dealings with the Indians at any of the trading posts.

It will be seen that paternalism in Canada knew no bounds. But already the monarch might have realised, had he been willing, that his system was doomed to failure. Self-reliance, individual enterprise, and the development of a political spirit on the part of the new settlers had been discouraged. To satisfy their needs, food, clothing, sheep and oxen were doled out by an indulgent parent, with the promise of more to good and obedient children. It is not surprising, therefore, to learn that, in course of time,

¹ The manufacturers and merchants of Canada objected to the purchase of furniture in France for the settlers. They wished every article to be bought from them at an excessive price whether it was good or bad. Talon, in supporting the settlers, incurred the ill-will of the merchants. Talon to Colbert, Nov. 10, 1670 (*New York Colonial Documents*, vol. ix. p. 70).

sloth and vanity obtained a firm grip on a people whose legitimate aspirations were nipped in the bud. For infants of tender age Louis XIV made an excellent nurse; but vigorous youth, declining to be fed any longer from the bottle, began by being amused and ended in becoming obnoxious. Thus matters drifted until it became obvious that a rude awakening must come before a healthy normal state could be regained. Whether this was to be brought about by the action of government or by other agencies no one at the period was bold enough to forecast. New France, both in the country places and in the towns, was still in the making. Opposing forces were striving lustily for mastery. Slowly but surely the powers of the Governor were being wrested from him and assumed by the Intendant. A bitter struggle for supremacy between the Bishop and the Governor was still undecided. The civil authorities were losing control over the people, and it was doubtful whether the Church would be successful in maintaining its influence. The root of all the social disorder of the time was the beaver trade in the woods. But it should be borne

in mind that this trade was divided between the true pioneers of commerce and a band of youthful and sometimes dissolute fellows who made the trade merely a pretext to cover a loose course of life.

For a time the Council had attempted to control the fur trade by ordaining that the Indians should bring their beaver to Montreal, Three Rivers, and Quebec, and dispose of them in open market to the highest bidder. When the Indians from the upper lakes came down to trade at Montreal, the scene was remarkable. Their advent upon more than one occasion gave rise to serious alarm, and by sound of cannon the people were summoned to arms. News would have been brought to the Governor that Lake St. Louis was covered with canoes, but whether the approaching visitors were friends or foes no one could tell. A few days later, with barbaric pomp and pageantry, five or six hundred men of various tribes—Hurons, Ottawas, Ojibways, Crees and Nipissings—would run the rapids and land near the town, bringing with them furs to the value of over one hundred thousand crowns. Then began the barter in which

all classes were eager to engage. It was a strange sight. In the streets might have been seen a noble of France in court attire talking through the interpreter to a picturesque savage besmattered with paint. The merchant, the *coureur de bois*, the officer, and even women of rank mingled in the throng, all with an eye upon the beaver.¹ After the first day the mart was not always the safest place, for the liberal use of brandy often rendered the savage obstreperous. But it was a sight not to be forgotten. By this method the Indian usually received a good price for his fur, and the habitant was kept at home. In time as the beaver became scarce, the Indian had to penetrate further and further into the interior for his stock. As the furs could only rarely be brought to the appointed places, permits were granted to the inhabitants to follow the Indians for the purpose of trade. This course, although necessary, gave rise to grave disorder, not

¹ "An Account of the Most Remarkable Occurrences in Canada, 1669, 1690" (*New York Colonial Documents*, vol. ix. p. 478). Cf. Parkman, *Count Frontenac and New France under Louis XIV*, chap. xii. (Champlain edition, Boston, 1897, pp. 21 *et seq.*).



THE FUR TRADERS AT MONTREAL
By G. A. Reid, R.C.A.

only in the traffic in brandy and in the sale of trading permits, but in general in the loss of control over the traders. Opportunities were given to an ever-increasing number of young men to escape from the seigneuries to the adventurous life of the interior.

There was indeed a peculiar attraction to youth in the bold career of the *coureur de bois*.

The nomadic life of the red man, the lure of trade, and the thirst for gold appealed with irresistible force to the imagination. The transition was great, the effect instantaneous. One can understand how, in the unchecked realisation of self, they despised the narrowness and the meanness of their late surroundings. No longer was it the case that they looked upon the daughters of their own people as fair, nor would they while they were permitted to roam at will with the nymphs of the forest, unchaperoned and unashamed. Still, while the authorities bewailed the lawlessness of the time they were powerless to check its progress. Sometimes these outlaws chose a leader and or-

ganised themselves into a band for the prosecution of the beaver trade. At times they penetrated far into the country. At Detroit and other places they built forts from which small parties sallied forth to mingle with the Indians, plying them with brandy and taking part in their revels; but, unless they became too dissolute, always keeping an eye on the beaver skins.

But the easy road to riches proved also an easy road to ruin.

"Facilis descensus Averni."

At times bands of these drunken brawlers, decked out as court gallants with plume in hat and sword at side, would swoop down upon Montreal for a grand carousal. Some were not content with the prevailing fashion in France, but added a touch of Indian finery in order to make an impression; while others, still bolder, abandoned clothes and adopted the inadequate disguise of war paint. Sometimes the natives accompanied them. Decrees ordering their arrest and punishment were posted up at all points, but they heeded

them not. Ever ready to meet opposition with a sword-thrust or crack of the skull, they were treated with the utmost deference and respect.¹ As long as their supply of beaver skins lasted, they spent their days in drinking and their nights in gambling; until, bankrupt, jaded, and morose, they returned again to the woods to procure the means for another orgy. Sometimes a few in a repentant mood would return to their homes, but they looked with contempt on ordinary mortals and impressed upon their relatives that they belonged to a distinct class, the equal of any noble in the land.

At one time the Governor estimated that there were at least eight hundred young men in this illicit trade. Probably there were many more. The seigneuries suffered in more ways than one. Lands remained uncultivated, wives and children were left destitute. "You are not aware how great the evil is," wrote Denonville; "it deprives the country of its effective men and renders them indocile

¹ A few were caught and punished, but in time of war the soldiers could not be spared for the pursuit of the outlaws.

and debauched, and incapable of discipline, and turns them into pretended nobles bearing the sword and decked out with lace: both they and their relations, who all affect to be gentlemen and ladies.¹ As for cultivating the soil, they will not hear of it. This, along with the scattered condition of the settlements, causes their children to be unruly as the Indians, being brought up in the same manner. Not that there are not some very good people here."²

Stringent regulations were promulgated by the Sovereign Council in its efforts to curb the evil. Any young man going into the woods without a license was to be flogged and branded for the first offence and committed to the galleys for the second.³ To harbour these outlaws was declared a crime. But with the small number of officials available in the colony for enforcing the King's com-

¹ An inhabitant of New France, unless a gentleman, was forbidden to assume the title of Esquire in any public document under a penalty of 500 livres. "Arret du Conseil d'Etat," April 10, 1684.

² *Correspondance Générale* C¹¹ I-10, p. 111.

³ "Edit du Roi, Aug. 18, 1681." *Edits et Ordonnances*, vol. i. (Quebec, 1854), p. 249.

mands, the ordinances usually became a dead letter.

Indeed there were too many men of prominence in the colony who were deriving a profit from the traffic in brandy either as dram sellers or as merchants, to make possible the enforcement of restrictions upon their most valuable allies. And thus with money in their pocket when they returned to civilisation, the outlaws, half savage in their nature, were practically as safe as when in the woods.

The brandy question was the most difficult problem which the country had to solve. Against the traffic were hurled the decrees of the King and the warnings of the Church; but both, for a time at least, were of no avail. The question was indeed a complicated one: commerce must be developed, and brandy appeared to be its most powerful promoter. On the other hand, the morals of the country must be preserved, and intoxication was their most deadly foe. To allow the Indian to continue in his course would end in his moral and physical destruction and in the ruin of the trade. But brandy to the savage had become a passion, and if deprived of it he

would simply turn to the English or the Dutch, who would supply him with unlimited rum. Commerce and the allegiance and salvation of the Indian seemed threatened whichever course was pursued. And so, while the Church beat ever against the gates of brazen iniquity, the State alternately threatened and coaxed.

The Sovereign Council, at the instigation of the Bishop, made several attempts to curb the traffic, but with little success. Those influential men in the colony who were reaping handsome profits by this nefarious trade, frowned upon any measure that would diminish their revenue. The Bishop made strong representations to the King, and finally the question was submitted to twenty of the most prominent residents in the colony, amongst them being François Jarret, Sieur de Verchères.¹ Sixteen of the members of the committee declared themselves in favour of the unrestricted use of brandy in the prosecution of trade.

Drunkenness and lawlessness, however, brought with them their own scourge. "Our

¹ See note at end of volume.

allies," said Denonville in a despatch of 1688, "have perished through the excessive use of brandy. The Canadians also ruin their health by it, and as the greater part of them drink large quantities of it early in the morning, they are incapable of doing anything the remainder of the day."¹ The Governor reports that "the chief mason was an excellent craftsman but a mighty drunkard." The chief engineer was no better, and the Governor was obliged to board him at the Château in order to keep him at work.²

The paternal and patriarchal system of government had failed. The people, checked at every turn, chafed and refused to be squeezed into the mould, and many went to the limit of unbridled freedom. But the very excess of their lawlessness was their own undoing. The debauched Indian was no longer fit or inclined to trade, and the jaded *coureur de bois* found it expedient to turn for existence to those peaceful arts which under the brief dominion of sense he had despised.

¹ *Correspondance Générale* C¹¹ 1-10, pp. 303-4.

² Denonville to Seignelay, June 8, 1687 (*New York Colonial Documents*, vol. ix. p. 329).

The justice of the protests of the Bishop were at last realised. Then the curés and the missionaries, whose numbers were increasing, made their presence and influence felt. The taverns were swept away; and when at last the peril of the Iroquois had disappeared under the lash of Frontenac, well ordered communities where the dram seller was almost unknown covered the scenes of former disorder.



FRONTENAC AND THE ENVOY OF PHIPS
From a painting by William Brymner, P.R.C.A.

CHAPTER VII

THE IROQUOIS ON THE WAR-PATH

THE year 1690 was a memorable year. France and England were at war, and an attack on Canada had been projected by the New England colonies. In the month of October, William Phips, commander-in-chief of all Their Britannic Majesties' Forces in New England, by sea and land, had demanded the surrender, within an hour, of Quebec. By sound of trumpet the Governor was to signify his willingness to transfer the entire country to the keeping of Their Majesties King William and Queen Mary, "upon doing whereof you may expect mercy from me as a Christian."

On presenting this demand the messenger had informed the Governor that it was ten o'clock, and that precisely at eleven o'clock he must return with an answer. But Fron-

tenac had replied: "I will not keep you waiting so long. I have no answer to give your General but from the mouths of my cannon. Let him do his best and I will do mine."¹

This unexpected answer of Frontenac entirely deceived the bold invader, who, from the information he had received from Madame Joliet, wife of the discoverer of the Mississippi, had believed that Quebec was unprepared to offer any defence.² A landing was effected on the Beauport shore, but the attacking force was repulsed, and, after a few manœuvres, Phips withdrew his vessels. Little did he realise that a short delay might have secured surrender. On receiving news through an Indian of the approach of the hostile fleet, Frontenac had summoned every available man between Montreal and Quebec to hasten to his support. Men flocked in from

¹ "An Account of what occurred in Canada on the descent of the English at Quebec, in the month of October, brought by an officer who embarked in *La Fleur de Mai*." *New York Colonial Documents*, vol. ix, pp. 455-458.

² Madame Joliet and Madame Lalande, her mother, were detained at Tadousac by Phips. *New York Colonial Documents*, vol. ix. p. 483.

far and near, quite sufficient to put up a good defence. But Canada was living from hand to mouth, and Quebec was totally unprepared to provide food for her defenders. Roots torn up from fields and gardens were eagerly devoured by the famishing soldiers; stores were pillaged, and it was only a question of hours before the pangs of hunger would force the people to welcome anyone who could offer them food. The disappearance of the fleet was indeed opportune, for ships bearing provisions and arms from France were already approaching, and their capture would have meant starvation. Great therefore was the rejoicing when the last sail of the invading force put out to sea and it was ascertained that the provision ships were safe. The *Te Deum* was sung in the church, solemn processions wended their way through the streets, and the praise of Frontenac was upon every lip.

Frontenac was indeed the man of the hour. Of all the representatives of the King in Canada, his is the most striking personality. His imperious temper had led to his recall by the King in 1682, but he was now Governor

of New France for the second time and exceedingly popular. The mental capacity of Louis XIV was not great, but fortunately he was surrounded by really great men whose views usually prevailed. Letellier the Chancellor, who knew the King well, aptly describes the attitude of his royal master towards matters of state: "Of twenty matters that we bring before the King we are sure that he will pass nineteen according to our wishes; we are equally certain that the twentieth will be decided against us, but which of the twenty will be decided contrary to our desires, we never know. The King reserves to himself this caprice to make us feel that he is master. But if perchance something is presented upon which he is obstinate and about which it is sufficiently important for us to be obstinate also, we very often get a dressing. But the dressing over, and the King content with having shown us that we can do nothing, he generally becomes supple and then we can do as we wish."¹ And so Frontenac, after he had been recalled and reprimanded, had been sent back to Canada

¹ *Memoirs of the Duke of Saint-Simon*, vol. iii. p. 24.

with even greater power. It was a fortunate stroke, for at that moment a strong man was required to cope with the military situation.

At the age of fifteen the young Count had seen service in Holland under the Prince of Orange, and at twenty-three had attained the rank of colonel in the regiment of Normandy. It was not until he was fifty-two years old, however, that he obtained his first commission as Governor and Lieutenant-General for the King in all New France.

Frontenac entered upon his duties with enthusiasm, determined that nothing should be wanting on his part to impress upon the inhabitants the dignity of his office. There was much to encourage and perhaps much to discourage him. Conditions in Canada must have seemed strange to a man who from early life had lived in the atmosphere of the French court. Notwithstanding the efforts of Colbert and Talon to build up the New World after the fashion of the Old, little more had been accomplished than the establishment of a long strip of frontier settlements on the edge of the wilderness.

His dominion was vast, but the means available for traversing it were hardly in accord with his ideas of viceregal progression. In the place of luxurious equipages travelling over well-made highways, there were uncomfortable carriages and rough sleighs drawn along well-nigh impassable roads. And instead of the gorgeous barge of state, there were the cramped quarters of a fragile birch-bark canoe.¹ Still, he made the best of a visit to the principal seigneuries between Quebec and Montreal, and was well pleased with the people if not with their mode of travel.

Of the people he was inclined to make a friend. In France the nobles, clergy and commoners had a voice, though only nominally, in public affairs. In New France he wished these orders to enjoy some of the privileges of which they had been shorn in the motherland. For the first order the selection was limited to a few gentlemen in Quebec

¹ "However accustomed I may already be to a canoe, 'tis rather the vehicle of a savage than of a King's Minister." Frontenac to Colbert, Nov. 2, 1672 (*New York Colonial Documents*, vol. ix. p. 90).

and to the officers of the Carignan regiment; for the second the members of the clergy were available; and the principal merchants and traders could form the third. The members of the Sovereign Council were difficult to classify. Their office gave them a certain precedence to which they were not entitled by rank. Some were seigneurs, others were traders. To make distinctions among the members of the Council would be impolitic, and therefore the Governor formed them into a fourth order. On the 23rd of October, 1672, these four estates were assembled with all due ceremony in the church of the Jesuits. In an eloquent address the Governor assured them that it was their privilege to serve the the King and that they should strive to uphold his supremacy in the New World. The oath of allegiance was administered, and the first and only meeting of the States-General of Canada was dissolved.¹

This was but one step in the direction of political freedom. Frontenac decided also to establish a municipal government for

¹ *New York Colonial Documents*, vol. ix. p. 94.

Quebec. Three aldermen were forthwith elected, the senior of whom was chosen as Mayor. He further arranged that a meeting of the inhabitants should be held twice a year for the discussion of measures affecting the general welfare of the colony. This seemed clearly a bid for popularity at the expense of monarchical absolutism. Louis XIV, in assuming the government of the colony, had made it quite clear that the people were to be held in tutelage. Now in a moment they were given a degree of freedom beyond anything that they might have secretly anticipated, and far beyond anything the King had ever intended for them. Frontenac informed the Court of the steps he had taken, and was roundly rebuked for his boldness.¹

To a man of the temper of Frontenac this reprimand must have been humiliating. It did not alter his determination to maintain his own supremacy in Canada as a reflex of that of the King in France. In carrying out this policy, however, he met with vigorous opposition both from the Intendant and from

¹ Colbert to Frontenac, June 13, 1673 (*New York Colonial Documents*, vol. ix. p. 95).

the distinguished prelate, Bishop Laval, the worthy descendant of a warrior race. Quarrels over jurisdiction were frequent, and at last both the Governor and the Intendant were recalled.

Frontenac's successors proved incapable of coping with the situation. The Iroquois, realising the weakness of administration in the colony, became once more aggressive. A vigorous leader was required to restore order and the choice fell on Frontenac, who was reappointed Governor.

When Phips invaded Canada, Frontenac was seventy years of age, but he seems to have lost none of the fire and vigour of youth. He rendered extraordinary service to the King by the influence he was able to exert over the Indians. This success was achieved at great sacrifice and personal discomfort. In the villages or "castles" of the Indians Frontenac was a welcome guest, since he would mingle with them in their rejoicings, would smoke, sing and dance, and even witness their horrible rites. On his visits to the Indians the Governor was both

diplomatic and courageous. He made it a point to fondle all the infants, gave them liberal presents of prunes and raisins from his pockets, and in the evening invited the dusky belles to dance with him. During these festivities the girls were bedecked with their most precious, though weighty, trinkets, porcelain ornaments of eight or twelve pounds. It is, therefore, perhaps not a matter of surprise that the Governor won the hearts of the people and that his praise was upon every lip.

But the season of rejoicing after the departure of the invader Phips was short. The men returned to their homes and to their meagre fare. To add to their distress, the Intendant, unable to provide for his troops, had billeted them upon the farmers, paying at the rate the King paid for the subsistence of the soldiers. Everything was exceedingly dear. Famine prices prevailed. Wheat was about two dollars and seventy cents per minot, wine was valued at one hundred écus per barrel and brandy at six hundred livres. Famine and its attendant miseries were not the only burdens of the settlers;

they had to face also the continual menace of Indian attack. On the banks of the Richelieu there were frequent incursions by the Iroquois, who made a bold effort to capture the fort at Verchères. They were repulsed by Madame de Verchères and her daughter Magdelaine, then only twelve years of age. In this manner the winter wore on without anything of importance to relieve either the monotony or the distress of the inhabitants.

With the first sign of spring hope revived. It was a vain hope. Rumours of a mighty invasion by New England reached Quebec, and just as the snow disappeared and men were searching in the fields for roots, and piercing the frozen streams for fish, the Governor was apprised of the encampment of a large body of Iroquois at the mouth of the Ottawa. From that point the Indians dispersed in small bands, some to rove over the Island of Montreal and others to land on the south shore of the St. Lawrence, where they destroyed corn and cattle and killed such of the inhabitants as they found unprotected.¹ La Chesnaye, Repentigny, and

¹ *New York Colonial Documents*, vol. ix. p. 516.

Boucherville were closely invested, and in the month of May young Verchères, the brother of Magdelaine, fell a victim at La Prairie de la Magdelaine. Something must be done for the existence of the colony was threatened. Frontenac had exhausted all his resources in order to appease the savages and win them over. Hatchet in hand, he had sung the war song, shouted, gesticulated and danced, to the delight of the chiefs. In sesquipedalian phrases filled with the flowers of their own rhetoric he had flattered them and assured them of his marvellous powers.¹ But the Iroquois at least had remained unappeased. The time had come for action.

Men were not wanting for any bold enterprise; a problem more difficult to solve was lack of provisions. Collectors were sent from door to door to pick up scraps of food, and thus sufficient was obtained to maintain a hundred men in the field for a few days. Under the leadership of Vaudreuil, a future

¹ "Hark ye, I speak to you as a father. My body is big. It is strong, and cannot die. I suppose what you witnessed above Montreal has frightened you. But think ye that I am no more,



THE GOVERNOR VISITS THE INDIANS
From a painting by C. W. Jefferys

Governor of Canada, these men were conducted to Fort Repentigny, in the neighbourhood of which about forty Iroquois were encamped.

Shortly after midnight the French landed and stealthily approached the house occupied by the enemy. Some of the Indians were inside the building, while others, outside, were stretched on the grass asleep. When within a few paces the French fired a close volley killing every man on the grass. Those inside immediately took to arms, fired from the door and windows, and succeeded in picking off several of their assailants. In a moment the house was set on fire, and, with the exception of four, the whole band was destroyed. One succeeded in making his escape, and the three who were captured were given over to the inhabitants and burnt

such as has prevailed during my absence and if eight or ten hairs have been torn from my children's heads when I was absent, that I cannot put ten handfuls of hair in the place of one which has been torn out? or that for one piece of bark that has been stripped from my cabin, I cannot put double the number in its stead, so as to make it stronger? Children, know that I always am." *New York Colonial Documents*, vol. ix. p. 449.

alive, in revenge for the cruelties perpetrated by their tribe.¹

This petty warfare was maintained without either party attaining any decisive advantage. Here and there individual settlers were meeting death almost daily at the hands of the prowling savages; whilst occasionally the French would succeed in surprising and exterminating one of the hostile bands. The actual loss of life sustained by the colony in these operations was not their most serious result: the terrorism inspired throughout all the agricultural districts and along the water communications paralysed the whole economic life of the community.

The strategy and tactics of the Iroquois were admirable. They knew exactly the strength and the weakness of the colony, and all their operations were based upon well-considered plans. Their main objects, it would seem, were to destroy the manhood of the colony and to isolate it from the sources of its commerce in the interior country.

¹ "Narrative of the most important occurrences in Canada, 1690, 1691" (*New York Colonial Documents*, vol. ix. p. 517).

So complete was this intimidation that the people often shut themselves up in the forts and refused to work in the fields. For two years the enemy maintained a blockade of the Ottawa, the principal channel for the conveyance of the beaver from the Upper Country to Montreal. With the opening of navigation the Indians would scatter themselves along its banks, intercepting any canoe whose occupants were hardy enough to venture into its dangerous waters. All attempts of the French to bring them to a decisive engagement at any one point were useless: they simply dispersed and renewed their depredations elsewhere.

The help given to the Iroquois by the English colonies to the south and east contributed to their persistence. The New Englanders, although unwilling to take the field with their savage allies, made them liberal presents and urged them to keep up the war. The inertia of the English colonists, which caused some dissatisfaction among the Indians, was due in part to the failure of Phips, whose expedition had been a costly experiment for the Puritans. Repeatedly rumours were set

afloat of another great expedition from Boston which was to set forth for the conquest of Canada, but they remained rumours. The people of New York were somewhat more vigorous. A raiding expedition under Peter Schuyler penetrated in 1691 down the Richelieu as far as La Prairie, generally called at the time Magdelaine de la Prairie, made a sudden attack on a large body of French regulars and Canadians, and after a skirmish escaped without serious loss.

The situation was very exasperating to Frontenac, but he was quite unable to bring the hostile Indians to obedience. The greatest danger lay in the descent of a well-equipped expedition from New England. Consequently, while the French Court was deliberating upon the policy of invading New York and destroying Boston, the Governor was making active preparations for strengthening the fortifications of Quebec, Montreal, and Three Rivers. Frantic efforts were put forth to complete the defensive works of Quebec. The inhabitants were forced to labour with scanty remuneration until a line of earth-works encircled the city. Even the Coun-

cillors were pressed into service as workmen. To meet the Indian peril the inhabitants were encouraged to undertake a warfare similar to that of the savages. A reward of twenty crowns was offered for every Iroquois' scalp, and considerable numbers were brought in. Then the King objected to the expense, although the Governor declared that ten crowns apiece for the scalps of the whole Iroquois confederacy would be a profitable investment for his Majesty. The Iroquois were not easily caught, and it is possible that there was some deception in the number of scalps that were charged to the Government, inasmuch as the scalps themselves were not sent as vouchers with the accounts.

All forms of agriculture had to be neglected. "Send us a thousand men next spring," wrote Frontenac in 1691, "if you desire the colony to be saved. We are perishing by inches, the people are in the depth of poverty. Not only food, but ammunition is required."¹ So desperate was the need, wrote Champigny, that leaden gullies and pipes in Quebec had

¹ *New York Colonial Documents*, vol. ix. p. 503.

been torn down to be run into bullets, and even the weights of the merchants were confiscated for the purpose.¹ But the troubles of the half-starved people were not over. A plague of caterpillars ravaged the country, and had it not been for the appearance of an unusual number of squirrels, half the population would have perished.² So New France passed through another winter of terror and suffering.

In 1692 Frontenac, strengthened by reinforcements, was in a position to take more effective measures to checkmate the wily savages, though still unable to put an end to their harassing attacks. In the middle of winter he decided to attack them in their own hunting-ground. In February one hundred and twenty Frenchmen and two hundred and five Indians set out from Montreal under Dorvilliers to seek the enemy. The troops tramped on snowshoes, each man carry-

¹ Champigny to the Minister, May 12, 1691 (*New York Colonial Documents*, vol. ix. p. 503).

² Frontenac and Champigny to the Minister, Sept. 15, 1692 (*Archives des Colonies*, C. 11, I. (*Correspondance Générale, Canada*), vol. xii. p. 1).

ing his provisions. On the third day out from Montreal, Dorvilliers upset a kettle of boiling water and scalded his foot. Being unable to proceed he resigned his command to Lieutenant Beaucourt, and the party proceeded as far as the Island of Tonihata, in the direction of Cataragui. Here they found fifty of the enemy and succeeded in killing twenty-four and capturing sixteen, while the loss to their expedition was five Indians and one Frenchman. The prisoners were handed over to the friendly Indians, who burnt them alive.

In order to ensure against another year of famine, arrangements were made to give military protection to the farmers to a much greater extent than hitherto. Five hundred men were kept on this service between Three Rivers and Montreal. During the harvest the reapers in the neighbourhood of Montreal were protected by a detachment of three hundred men. Whenever possible all the inhabitants of a seigneurie, men, women and children, turned out to work in the fields. Sometimes one-half the men were told off to stand guard over the labourers. At other

times a squad of regular troops patrolled the fields. As soon as the work on one field was finished they passed to the next, and no work was attempted without a guard at seed-time or harvest. As evening approached all tools were gathered in and the labourers returned under escort to their palisaded forts. The scene resembled a convict prison and forced labour, rather than that of a free-born people.

Yet in spite of all precautions the audacity of the enemy remained undiminished, and time and again by a sudden bold onset they would add to their roll of prisoners or scalps. The records of the time relate how, on one occasion, as a mother and her fifteen-year-old daughter were gleaning a few yards distant from the reapers, a savage, concealed by some slight cover, pounced upon them. The mother in defence seized her child, whereupon the savage promptly broke her arm. A soldier on the outskirts of the field hastened to the woman's assistance and wounded the Indian severely, but nevertheless he made good his escape with the girl.¹ Two farmers mowing in the mead-

¹ *New York Colonial Documents*, vol. ix. p. 537.

ows a few miles below Montreal were suddenly surrounded and carried off captives. At La Chesnaye, eighteen miles from Montreal, nine of the habitants were engaged in the fields, when they were attacked by a large band and spirited away. A detachment of eight men under Duplessis was sent from Montreal to protect the neighbourhood, but this did not prevent the Indians from taking two more of the farmers of La Chesnaye. The following night the village of La Chesnaye was given to the flames, and the inhabitants either captured or killed.¹

The Iroquois realised that they were fighting for existence. Lords of the forest for centuries, they hated restraint and opposition, and in European civilisation as they saw it there was no compensation for the freedom of the woods. Already, it is true, a few of their numbers had come under the influence of the French missionaries and had established themselves in mission settlements in the vicinity of Montreal. For the majority this was only a further incentive to hostility.

¹ "Narrative of Military Operations in Canada, 1691, 1692" (*New York Colonial Documents*, vol. ix. p. 536).

They still hoped that, with the help of English firearms, they could destroy their French foes as they had destroyed the native races of the Hurons, the Eries and the Illinois. The English colonists had no desire to maintain forever the dominion of their bronze allies, but they were quite as willing as the French to make use of them against their enemies of European origin. The extinction of the sway of the savage over the lands of North America was necessary, no doubt, but the methods of English, French, and Dutch traders in bringing it about seem mean and contemptible.

Such was the condition of the country when Magdelaine de Verchères, in the defence of her father's home, brought immortal glory to her name.

CHAPTER VIII

MAGDELAINE DE VERCHÈRES

"BEAUTY," says Isocrates, "has raised more mortals to immortality than all other virtues." These words may be true. And yet after making due allowance for the partiality of the Greeks it is clear that more than physical perfection was understood. Argive Helen, no less than her rivals of epic story, Iseult of Ireland, Cleopatra of Egypt, Brynhild of the Saga, and Sita of the Rāmāyana, had each some mental attribute to grace mere beauty of face or form. But whatever range of empire beauty may have attained over the imagination, through the creations of the poet, surely deeds of heroism, especially when associated with feminine charm, appeal to the heart with irresistible force, since they strike the most sensitive chords of our nature.

Canada is still young, and judged by the standards of those countries which were old and grey at the time of her birth, she has no literature. The story of her infancy is only half revealed. Year by year new facts relating to her history are discovered. Some throw an entirely new light on a hitherto obscure incident, others give a new significance or an added picturesqueness to events already well known. But generations must elapse before they can become a part of our general knowledge. Some day, perhaps far distant, we shall enter into the full status of our national life. Then we shall appreciate the value of those treasures which are as yet a sealed book. Then also, as of old in other climes, poet, painter, sculptor, the writer of history and the writer of romance, will put forth their efforts to create an art and a literature worthy of the Canadian people. For the present the work of digging and delving must go on.¹

¹ Many a page of Canadian History was destroyed in the winter of 1793, when the Archives served to feed the stove of the Garde Nationale for a period of five weeks. And again in 1830, when the records were sold by the pound for the profit of dishonest officials.

For over two hundred years the story of Magdelaine de Verchères lay buried in the Archives of Paris. For a time the story seems to have been kept a secret, until the hand of poverty fell heavily upon Magdelaine's family and she ventured to appeal to the Comtesse Maurepas for a commission for her brother as an ensign, or a small pension of fifty crowns for her family.¹ "The cruel war we have been engaged in up to this time against the Iroquois," wrote Magdelaine, "has enabled many of our people to furnish proof of their great zeal for the Prince. While my sex does not permit me to have other inclinations beyond those required of me; nevertheless, Madame, allow me to tell you that I sometimes aspire to fame quite as eagerly as many men. Women in France during the late war went forth at the head of the peasants to repel the enemy. The women of Canada would be no whit less eager to manifest their zeal for the King should the occasion arise." The Court became interested in her story, and requested the Comtesse

¹ Magdelaine received a pension of 150 livres in 1701. (See note at end of chapter.)

de Beauharnois, wife of the Governor, to gather the particulars of the young girl's life. These were set forth in the form of a letter and sent to France.¹

The Iroquois, as we have seen, were unusually aggressive during the summer of 1692, particularly on the banks of the Richelieu; but, as the season waned and autumn crept on, raids were less frequent. The small crops, which it was the object of the savage to destroy, had been gathered in, but there was still much work to be done. Towards the middle of October confidence was restored, the censitaires returned to their homes and neglected lands, some of which were situated three or four miles from the palisaded forts on the banks of the St. Lawrence. The whole seigneurie of Verchères was in a deplorable condition, for within the past two years little had been done towards its maintenance. The invasion of Phips had called every able-bodied man to Quebec, and since that time the whole country had been in a state of alarm. In several places the

¹ See note on p. 1.



THE ATTACK ON FORT VERCHÈRES
From a painting by C. W. Jefferys



palisades had fallen into decay, affording easy access to the interior, but even these had not been replaced. Beyond the fort was a fairly strong redoubt connected with it by a covered way. The Seigneur of Verchères, who longed to return to his home and family, had been ordered to report for duty at Quebec. Madame de Verchères had been called to Montreal, and the sole occupants of the fort were Magdelaine, her two young brothers aged twelve, an old man of eighty, two soldiers, a servant named Laviolette, and a few women and children belonging to the people in the fields.

Early in the morning of the 22nd of October, Magdelaine, attended by Laviolette, passed through the gate of the fort to the river front, situated about a hundred and fifty yards distant. While inspecting her boats, the stillness of the morning air was broken by the sound of a shot, followed by a piercing yell from the direction of the fields. At the same time a woman appeared at the gate crying, "Run, Mademoiselle, run, the Iroquois are upon us!" But Magdelaine needed no warning. Too well she knew the mean-

ing of that piercing cry from the fields. The tomahawk and the scalping-knife had done their work. A score of her brave censitaires had fallen. "I turned on the instant and beheld some forty-five Iroquois running towards me and already within pistol shot. Then, commending myself to the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of my God, I ran towards the fort, determined not to fall into the hands of my pursuers. Meanwhile the enemy perceiving that they were too far off to capture me alive, stood still to discharge their muskets at me."

But the girl faltered not in her flight nor lost her presence of mind, crying as she ran, "To arms! To arms!" Forty-five bullets passed over her head and around her, and just as she was entering the gate a savage, more swift than his fellows, caught the flowing wrap that covered her shoulders. For a moment her fate seemed sealed; but freeing herself from the garment she seized the gate and with the strength born of despair slammed it in the face of her pursuer.

"I hoped," said Magdelaine, "that my call 'To Arms!' would bring some one to my aid; but it was a vain hope. The two soldiers within the Fort were so overcome with fear that they had concealed themselves in the redoubt." The cry of anguish from the fields had been heard in the fort, women were bewailing the loss of their husbands and little children were calling for their fathers who would never return. Magdelaine had no time for tears, nor thought of fear. "I then began to consider how I could save myself and the little party with me. I examined the fort and found several of the stakes had fallen, leaving gaps through which the enemy might enter. I gave orders to have the stakes replaced, seized the end of one and urged my companions to give a hand in raising it, for I have found by experience that when God gives strength nothing is impossible.¹ After the breaches had been repaired I betook myself to the redoubt which had served

¹ Magdelaine was in command, and it was necessary to give orders, but it is interesting to note that these commands were carried out by herself.

as a guard-house and armoury. Here I found the two soldiers, one lying down and the other with a burning fuse in his hand. 'What are you doing with this fuse?' I demanded." "We want to fire the powder and blow up the fort," was the craven's reply. "You miserable wretches," retorted the girl, stamping her foot, "Begone! I command you." "I spoke so firmly," adds Magdelaine, "that he obeyed forthwith." The time for action had come. Casting aside her hood and donning a soldier's helmet, she seized a musket and thus addressed her two little brothers: "Let us fight unto the death for our country and our faith. Remember the lessons our father has taught us, gentlemen are not born but to shed their blood in the service of God and the King." "Stirred by these words my brothers and the two soldiers kept up a steady fire against the foe. I caused the cannon to be fired not only to strike terror into the hearts of the Iroquois and to show them that we were well able to defend ourselves since we had a cannon, but also to warn

our soldiers who were away hunting to take refuge in some other fort."¹

Determined to fight even unto death, this child of fourteen was keenly alive to another source of danger. Above the roar of the cannon rose the cries of the women and children. This was a sign of weakness which the wily enemy might turn to his profit. And so while the cannon thundered forth defiance Magdelaine firmly but kindly told the women that their shrieks must cease, since the safety of all depended on the assumption of calm indifference.

While she was thus speaking she beheld from her point of vantage the approach of a canoe which was about to land at the spot where she had first encountered the Iroquois. It was the *Sieur Fontaine* and his family returning from *Montreal*. Beyond musket shot the Iroquois were still keeping vigil, and it was obvious that unless promptly

¹ Magdelaine makes this excuse for the absent soldiers, but it is highly probable that they were far beyond the sound of cannon, engaged in illicit trade with the Indians. However this may be, we hear no more of the "Soldiers" during the eight days of the siege.

succoured, the Lafontaines must fall a prey to the enemy. The two soldiers were bidden to proceed to the river, which was not more than a hundred yards away, but "perceiving by their silence that they had little heart for the work, I ordered Laviolette to stand sentry at the gate of the fort and keep it open, and I myself would go. Leaving instructions that if I were killed the gates were to be closed and the fort defended to the last extremity, I took my musket and still wearing my soldier's helmet, I sallied forth to the defence of the party. As I expected, the enemy believed that this was but a ruse to induce them to approach the fort in order that our people might make a sortie upon them."

"Reaching the river without mishap I bade Fontaine land his family, and then placing them before me marched boldly to the fort within sight of the foe. Strengthened by recruits from Pierre Fontaine's canoe, I gave orders to continue firing." The day wore on, the sun disappeared, and a fierce north-easter accompanied by snow and hail ushered in a night of awful severity. Wind

and weather had no terror for the Iroquois, and the night to them was more favourable than the day. "Knowing the tactics of the Indians, I felt sure they would make a close investiture of the place as soon as darkness set in. Gathering my little force, I thus addressed them: 'God has saved us to-day from the hands of our enemies; but we must be careful not to be caught in their snares to-night. For my part I wish to show you that I am not afraid. The two soldiers, La Bonté and Salhet, will take Lafontaine and the women and children to the redoubt which is the strongest place. You have nothing to fear, and I bid you not to surrender the place even if I am taken, cut to pieces and burnt before your eyes. I shall guard the fort with the youth of eighty, who has never fired a gun, and my two brothers.' "

These words made a deep impression on the little party, and the soldiers would probably have been quite willing to take their share in that lonely wintry watch upon the towers of Fort Verchères. But Magdelaine had no desire to delegate her authority. She was the head of the family in the mean-

time and would maintain the honour of her house. Self-reliant, she scorned to seek the advice of her elders. No murmur of complaint at the hardness of her lot escaped her lips. Mistress of the fort, upon her alone must devolve the measures necessary for its defence. And so she marshalled her slender army. Each of her brothers, and the "youth" of eighty, were given a bastion, while she herself would command the fourth. Through the long watches of the night each played his part to the life. There was no interval for rest, for until dawn approached the enemy must have frequent proof of their vigilance. The fierce north-east wind whistled through the palisades, and the hail stung their faces, but ever above the noise of the storm could be heard at brief intervals on bastion and redoubt the cry of the faithful sentinels, "All's well!"

"One would have thought," said Magdelaine, "that the Fort was crowded with warriors." And indeed the Iroquois, with all their astuteness and skill in warfare, were completely deceived; for at a later date they acknowledged to the Governor of Montreal

that they had held a council previous to making a night attack, but that the increasing vigilance of the guards and their losses from the musketry fire had prevented them from carrying out their design. But the night was not without adventure. An hour after midnight the sentry at the gate cried out, "Mademoiselle, I hear something approaching." "I left my post to join him," said Magdelaine, "and through the darkness, aided by the reflection from the snow, saw a group of horned cattle, the remnant which had escaped from our enemies. My first impulse was to open the gate and let them in, but, being well aware of the tricks of the savages in covering themselves with the skins of animals I determined to wait. After having satisfied myself that there was no danger, I called my two brothers to my side, and each with a musket in hand stood ready to fire, as I opened the gate and let the poor cattle in."

At last the morning dawned, and with the rising of the sun "the gloom which had fallen on most of my companions disappeared, although the enemy were still watching in

the distance. Calling my company together, I said, 'Since by God's help we have escaped the terrors of the night we can by constant vigilance pass through other days and nights until help arrives.' " But the wife of *Sieur Fontaine* felt no security in *Fort Verchères*, which she declared utterly worthless. She therefore begged her husband to convey her to *Contrecoeur*, five leagues distant. The fort, no doubt, afforded little protection, but the heart of its defender was a surer defence than gates of oak. The poor husband, finding his wife persistent in her demand, offered to provide her with a good boat which could be managed by her two children. As for himself, he declared that he would never abandon the fort as long as its mistress wished to hold it. And *Magdelaine*, on her part, insisted that the weakness of the fort only made her the more determined to hold it at all costs. If ever the *Iroquois* became masters, or realised how poorly it was defended, they would not rest until they had destroyed all the forts in the vicinity.

Calm had succeeded storm, and the rays of the sun had melted the snow and sleet, leaving the fields as fresh as in the summer, when Magdelaine cast her eye on the surrounding country. From the bastion she could see the flames ascending from the houses of her censitaires, and on the breeze was borne the cries of distress from the captives, and the yells of bloodthirsty Indians. There must be no relaxation of duty. Once more orders were given for the defence during the day. An hour after midday Magdelaine recalled the fact that a quantity of linen had been left to bleach on the banks of the river. Clothing was a luxury, prized even more dearly than food, and it must be recovered at any cost. The soldiers were invited to accompany her to the shore, but they displayed no more eagerness for the task than on a former occasion. The commandant of the fort decided to take the risk herself. The gate was opened, and, amidst the roar of the cannon from the bastion, the girl and her two brothers marched with firm tread to the river, gathered up the linen, and, shouldering their sacks, made the

return march within sight of the enemy. For the second time the Iroquois were outgeneralled.

For eight days and nights the defence was kept up, but the strain was beginning to tell not only upon the little army but upon their gallant leader. Early on the morning of the ninth day the sentry reported that he had heard some movements on the water. Magdelaine was dozing with her head upon a table and a musket across her arms. In an instant she mounted the bastion and demanded in a loud voice: "Qui êtes vous?" "Français," was the response; and then, to the great joy of Magdelaine she ascertained that M. de la Monerie, a lieutenant, and forty men had been sent from Montreal to her relief. The gate of the fort was thrown open, a soldier was left on guard, and once more the girl sallied forth to the river; but this time on a joyous errand. "As soon as I saw the officer in command I saluted him, saying, 'Sir, you are welcome; I surrender my arms to you.' 'Mademoiselle,' said he with a courtly air, 'they are in good hands.' 'Better than you think,' " said she. Then,

headed by the troops, the march to the fort began, while the Iroquois looked on with amazement and bethought it prudent to raise the siege, since they had evidently been outwitted by a girl. When the troops reached the fort, the commander was asked to inspect the works, and found, as Magdelaine had stated, a sentry upon each bastion. And although he may have been amused at the strange mingling of youth and age, he was nevertheless filled with admiration at the gallant defence which had been made by the heroine of Fort Verchères. "Sir," said Magdelaine, "kindly release my sentries that they may take a little rest, for they have not left their posts for eight days."

Here we leave Magdelaine to take the rest she so sorely needed. "For God and the King" had been her motto, and both she had served faithfully.

On Verchères Point, near the site of the Fort, stands a statue in bronze of the girl who adorned the age in which she lived and whose memory is dear to posterity. For she had learned so to live that her hands were

clean, her paths were straight, and her honour was even as that of a child. To all future visitors to Canada by way of the St. Lawrence, this silent figure of the first Girl Scout in the New World conveys a message of loyalty, of courage, and of devotion.



THE RELIEF OF THE FORT
From a painting by C. W. Jefferys

NOTE ON
THE SEIGNEUR DE VERCHÈRES
AND HIS FAMILY

François Jarret, sieur de Verchères, son of Jean de Jarret of the Dauphinoise noblesse, was born at Saint Chef in the diocese of Vienne, Dauphiny, in 1641. At an early age he adopted the profession of arms and obtained a commission under M. de Contrecœur in the regiment of the Prince de Carignan, which was ordered to Canada in 1665. Ensign Verchères took his part in two expeditions with the troops against the Iroquois. When the order for the recall of the regiment was given in 1668, the Intendant proposed to make grants of land to the officers and men who were willing to remain. Two companies, of sixty men each, were sent back to France, and the others settled in Canada,¹ amongst them de Verchères.

The young officer, who was then twenty-four years of age, took up his abode in the Island of Orleans, opposite Quebec, and while there was smitten

¹ *Histoire de l'ancienne Infanterie Française*, par Louis Susane, Paris, 1851.

by the charms of a *jolie brunette Canadienne*, of fourteen summers, Marie Perrot, daughter of Jacques Perrot dit Vildaigne.¹ The courtship was apparently brief, for on the 17th of September, 1669, with all due ceremony, the two were united in the bonds of matrimony by M. Morel, missionary priest, in the presence of M. de Grandville and M. Guillaume Bosché.

The world was before the young couple and although their means were slender it is possible that their wants were few. On the 11th of January, 1671, a son was born, who was given the name of Antoine. Then de Verchères appears to have considered the future. On the 29th of October, 1672, he obtained a grant of a square league of land on the St. Lawrence situated between the concessions of the Sieur de Grand Maison and M. de Vitré. Lands were of no particular value at that period, and if there were more land between the two concessions than a square league it was to be divided equally between Vitré and himself.

In 1673 Ile aux Prunes and Ile Longue were added to the seigneurie by Frontenac, but neither these islands nor the original concession appear to have been profitable for cultivation. However, Verchères gave the land a fair trial, for it was not until 1678 that an additional league in the rear of the seigneurie was granted. Verchères had now in addition to his two islands, a strip amounting to two square leagues,

¹ *La Famille Jarret de Verchères*, par Pierre Georges Roy (Lévis, 1908), p. 11.

with a frontage on the St. Lawrence and a depth extending almost to the Richelieu. In time of peace this was a distinct advantage, inasmuch as the river was the only means of communication, but in warlike times it had its disadvantage. Verchères was situated at an exceedingly vulnerable point, midway between Sorel and Montreal. Fort Richelieu on the one side and Fort Chambly on the other were forts of considerable importance, but they were too far removed from Verchères to render any effective help on a sudden attack. Therefore especial care was taken to surround the manor house with a strong palisade. Within the little enclosure the family of Verchères was brought up.

There were twelve children. The second child, Marie Jeanne, was born on the 8th of March, 1674. She married, at the age of twelve years and eight months, Jean de Douhet, sieur de Larivière; but her husband was killed by the Iroquois on the borders of the Richelieu during the following year.

The third member of the family, François Michel, was born on the 19th of July, 1675. His career was brief. On the 7th of May, 1681, when scarcely sixteen years of age, he was killed by a band of 300 Iroquois who made a descent on the mill of M. de Bert, at La Rivière des Prairies.

On the 3rd of March, 1678, another daughter was born, Marie Magdelaine, whose heroic act was to bring glory to the family of Verchères and to add a bright page to the history of New France.

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Another member of the family, Pierre Jarret, born in 1680, obtained a commission as ensign in the Troupes de la Marine in 1693 at the age of thirteen. In 1708 he took part in the expedition by Saint Ours and Rouville against the New Englanders and was killed in an action at Haverhill. "This party was composed of one hundred French soldiers and settlers and sixty Indians, under the command of MM. d'Eschailions and Rouville, and M. de la Perrière, ensign, who commanded the Indians. They set out in the following order: MM. d'Eschailions and Rouville by St. Francis with all the French and the Abenakis and Népissingues: and M. de la Perrière, by Lake Champlain, with the Indians of the Sault and of the Mountain. All were to meet at a lake near the English [settlements], but the Indians commanded by M. de la Perrière, whether tampered with by the English, or wishing to cover our nation with shame by disorganising the party, came back to their huts, so that M. de la Perrière was obliged to give up the march, not having been able to find two men among them who would show him the way to join the party. The Indians excused themselves on the score of a disease which was general in their villages. . . . There were killed in action, M. de Verchères, ensign, M. de Chambly, petty officer, five French and three Indians; and we have had eighteen men, French and Indians wounded."¹

¹ Vaudreuil and Raudot to the Minister, Nov. 14, 1708 (*Archives des Colonies*, C.11, I. (*Correspondance Générale, Canada*), vol. xxviii).

Madame

Nos Canadiens ne reçoivent du bien que sous Les auspice
De mon seigneur Le Comte de maurepas qu'ils regardent
regardent comme Leur protecteur, Les Cruelles guerres
que nous avons eues jusqu'à présent contre Les Iroquois
ont donné Lieu à plusieurs de mapatrie. De donner des
preuves du zèle ardent qu'ils ont pour le service du
Prince, quoy que mon sexe ne me permette pas, d'auoir
d'autre Inclinations, que celles qui exigent de moy, cependant
permettre, moy, madame, de vous dire, que J'ay des Antécédens
qui me portent à la gloire comme, à bien des hommes

Le hazard a fait que me trouuant à l'âge de quatre-vingt
ans, environ à quatre cents pas du fort de vercheres —
qui est à mon pere, à huit heures de montreal dans
Lequel Il ny auoit qu'un soldat en faction Les Iroquois —
qui estoient cachés, aux environs dans Les buissons —
firent tout a coup une irruption sur tous nos habitants
Dont Ils enleuerent une vingtaine. Je fus poursuivie
par un Iroquois, Jusques aux portes, mais comme —
Je m'enfuyais, dans ce fatal moment, le peu d'assurance,
Dont une fille est capable et peut estre armée Je luy
Laiday entre Les mains mon mouchoir de sol et le —
fermay la porte sur moy. en Quant aux armes et

fermay la sans marrester aux gémissements de
plusieurs femmes désolées de voir enlever leurs
Maris. Je monté sur le bastion ou estoit le sentinelle,
vous diray. Madame que je me metamorphosay, —
pour Lors en mettant le Chapeau du soldat sur
Chalotte, et que faisant plusieurs petits mouvements,
pour donner a connoistre quil y avoit beau coup de
Monde. quoy quil m'eut que le soldat, Je chargeay
Moy-même un sacron de quatre livres de balle que
Je tiré par Lay, le coup sy presquite, eut heureusement
tout le succès, que je pouvois attendre pour avertir les
forts voisins de se tenir sur leurs gardes, Quant que
les François ne firent les mêmes coups, Je lay eussime
quil y a eu en France des personnes de mon sexe dans cette
dernière guerre qui se sont mises a latete de leurs partisans
pour s'opposer a l'invaison des ennemis qui entroient
dans leur province, les Canadiennes n'auroient pas
moins de passion de faire eclater leurs zele pour la
gloire du Roy si elles en trouvoient l'occasion il y a
Cinquante Cinquant que mon pere. est actuellement au
service, la destinée n'est pas heureuse la nostre l'est encore.
Moi, nous regardons Monseigneur de maarepas comme
le soutien du Canada, pour vous madame. honorez nous
nous autres filles de vos bontez quil plaise a votre
generosité me faire avoir une petite pension de cinquante
escus, comme a plusieurs femme d'officié du pais qui en ont
si Je ne puis esperer cette grace que le bien que vous
voudriez me faire rejallisse du moins sur un de mesfreres

qui est cadis dans nos troubles faitas luy donner il
vous plait une enseigne il sçait le service il s'est
trouvé dans plusieurs expéditions contre les Iroquois
J'en ay même eu une grâce par eux, nous serons
obligés de continuer nos prières à Dieu pour votre
prosperité. et celle de Monseigneur de mauregais
Je fait avec un très profond respect

Madame

Vostre très humble et très
obéissante et très respectueuse
servante
Marie magdelaine
Deverchère

de quebec le 13^e octobre 1699

Besides the children already referred to, there were Alexandre Jarret de Verchères, Angélique Jarret de Verchères, Catherine Gabrielle Jarret de Verchères, Jean-Baptiste Jarret de Verchères, Louis Jarret de Verchères, François Jarret de Verchères, and Joseph Jarret de Verchères Pouligny.

Magdelaine was brought up in the midst of war. She had already lost one brother and a brother-in-law through the treachery of the Iroquois. Surely the lesson of her father, "Gentlemen are not born but to shed their blood in the service of God and the King," had been brought home to her.

The seigneur of Verchères was a man of importance. When the King, in 1678, the year of Magdelaine's birth, desired to obtain an expression of opinion on the use of brandy in the prosecution of commerce, he directed the Governor to summon twenty of the principal inhabitants to confer with the Sovereign Council on the question. Amongst those chosen was the sieur de Verchères. He was in favour of the uninterrupted use of the commodity and recorded his views in the following words:

"Que la traite doit être entièrement permise tant des dites boissons comme des autres marchandises, étant extrêmement utile au commerce du pays et pour donner le repos aux consciences qui, depuis plusieurs années ont été troublées par ce qu'on n'a pu empêcher les personnes qui en paraissaient les plus éloignées de faire ce commerce, voyant bien que ce n'est qu'un

mystère qui continuerait, s'il n'y était pourvu par Sa Majesté, d'autant qu'en premier lieu le cas réservé a fait un très grand tort au dit commerce, les habitants ne pouvant souffrir qu'on emportât le profit chez les nations éloignées, et qu'ils n'ont fait aucune difficulté de passer pardessus toutes ces considérations quoiqu'il leur reste du scrupule, ce qui les a obligés d'être plusieurs années sans s'approcher des sacrements, en second lieu, que l'on fait croire que les sauvages ont une grande avidité pour la boisson, ce qui devrait être, parce qu'elle ne leur est donnée qu'en cachette pour leur argent, et que cette manière d'agir leur fait connaître qu'on les traite en bêtes et qu'on veut les distinguer des Français, ce qui leur peut donner occasion de s'en éloigner, et que si on en usait autrement, on les obligerait à vivre comme nous et à nous servir, et que bien loin que cette liberté de traiter de la boisson les empêche d'embrasser notre religion, elle les y porterait, ce qui se prouve par les Outaouas qui ne sont point enclins à boire et chez lesquels on n'a pas fait de grands progrès; que quant aux désordres que la dite traite cause, ils sont en petit nombre, à proportion des peuples, et que lorsqu'ils connaissent l'autorité royale et la manière dont on punit les vices, ils n'y sont pas communs."¹

Although the use of brandy was undoubtedly pernicious we have no proof that Verchères was either addicted to drink or that he shared in the profit of

¹ Pierre Margry, *Établissements des Français dans l'Amérique Septentrionale*, vol. I^{er}, p. 413.

illicit trade. Indeed it seems possible that he did not, since by the end of the year 1680, the seigneurie consisted of twenty arpents which were cleared. He had twelve head of cattle and eleven censitaires, who occupied eighty-nine arpents. In 1687 the seigneur had to suspend operations, being called upon to take his part in the expedition of the Governor Denonville against the Tsonnontouans. In this expedition there were one hundred Indians from Sault St. Louis, sixty Indians of the Mountain, forty Hurons of Lorette, sixty Abenakis and several Algonquins with 1,800 men, divided into four battalions regulars and militia. It was a strange array, Indians in their war paint, some with horns on their heads, nobles of France, militia men from the farms, regular troops from the motherland. The Indians of different tribes chanted strange songs as they marched, indulged in grotesque dances and yelled in horrible discord, turning the night into wild scenes of revelry. In 1694 Verchères was appointed Lieutenant. He died on the 26th of February, 1700.

At the time of his death the Sieur de Verchères was in receipt of a pension of 150 livres, and in 1701 this amount was transferred to Magdelaine on the condition that she support her mother. On the death of her mother the payment was continued to Magdelaine.¹

Mlle. de Verchères was married in 1706 to an ensign in the troupes de la Marine, Pierre Thomas

¹ *Archives des Colonies*, B. 23, p. 203.

Tarieu, Sieur de la Perade, son of the Sieur de La Naudière. The family of La Naudière rendered distinguished service to the King. A direct descendant of Magdelaine de Verchères, Lieut.-Col. Charles Tarieu de la Naudière, of Joliette, is now on active service with the Overseas Contingent. Another descendant is Alice de La Naudière, wife of Norman de Rieutord Neilson of Quebec. Madame de la Perade, who was highly esteemed, died on the 8th of August, 1747.¹

¹ A complete history of the family of Verchères is to be found in *La Famille Jarret de Verchères*, par Pierre Georges Roy (Lévis, 1908), and in the work of the Abbé Baillairgé, curé of Verchères.

NOTE ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

The excellent illustrations, designed solely for this volume, add greatly to the interest of the narrative.

The Frontispiece, a charming view of the old wind-mill, situated near the site of the fort at Verchères, is from a painting by Her Royal Highness Princess Patricia, who has graciously devoted her talent to assist the object of this work.

Mr. Gerald S. Hayward, who has won distinction as a miniature painter in Europe and America, has exhibited at the Academy, London. He has had the honour of painting several members of the Royal Family. His miniature in this book is after an old coloured print at one time in the possession of Lord Lisgar, Governor-General of Canada in 1869. In the original picture the girl is standing before an open fire-place, such as may be found in a seigneurial manor-house in France. In the back-ground of the miniature Mr. Hayward has cleverly introduced a view of the Fort and a stretch of the St. Lawrence. At the recent exhibition of the Royal Canadian Academy held in Montreal, twenty-three miniatures by Mr. Hayward were shown. Amongst those of special interest to Canadians are portraits of Lady Minto and of Lady Eileen Elliot.

The reception of the ambassador Phips at Quebec in 1690 by the Count de Frontenac, an excellent piece

of work, is by the President of the Royal Canadian Academy, Mr. William Brymner, who has exhibited at the Salon in Paris and at the London Academy. Examples of Mr. Brymner's latest pictures were shown at the exhibition of the Academy in December last. The National Gallery at Ottawa and the Dominion Archives possess excellent specimens of his art.

Three illustrations in the volume were painted by Mr. Charles William Jefferys. They represent the attack on Fort Verchères, The Relief of the Fort, and the Count de Frontenac taking part in the festivities of the Indians. Mr. Jefferys is well known as an illustrator through his contributions to the leading publications in the United States and Canada. He has recently illustrated a series of volumes entitled "Chronicles of Canada," and is at present engaged in illustrating the works of Haliburton in black and white. His sketches of "Sam Slick" are exceedingly clever.

Another illustration, "The Fur Traders at Montreal," is from the drawing of Mr. George A. Reid, R.C.A., formerly President of the Royal Canadian Academy. Mr. Reid excels as a figure painter, but has exhibited many landscapes. Several examples of his art are in the National Gallery and in the Public Archives, Ottawa.

The reproduction of these pictures in colour has been carried out with skill by the Mortimer Co., Limited.

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The principal sources for the story of Magdelaine de Verchères are the following manuscripts:

Relation Des faits héroïques de Mademoiselle Marie Magdelaine de Verchères contre Les Iroquois agée de Quatorze ans En L'année 1692 Le 22 octobre à huit heures du matin.—Archives du Ministère des Colonies. F. 3, 7, fo. 434.

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These were discovered in 1898, by Mr. Richard, of the Dominion Archives staff.

The most reliable materials dealing with life in New France from the creation of the Sovereign Council until the death of Frontenac are:

Manuscripts:—Archives du Ministère des Colonies:

Série B. Lettres envoyées.

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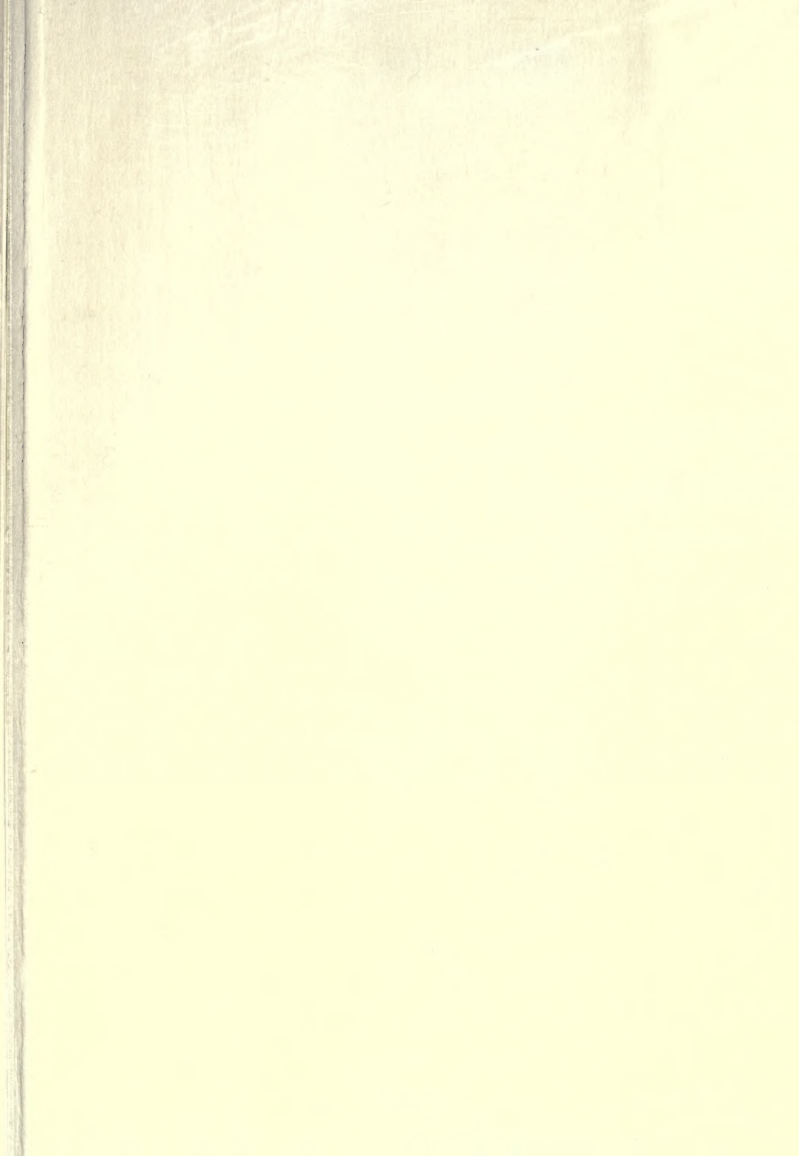
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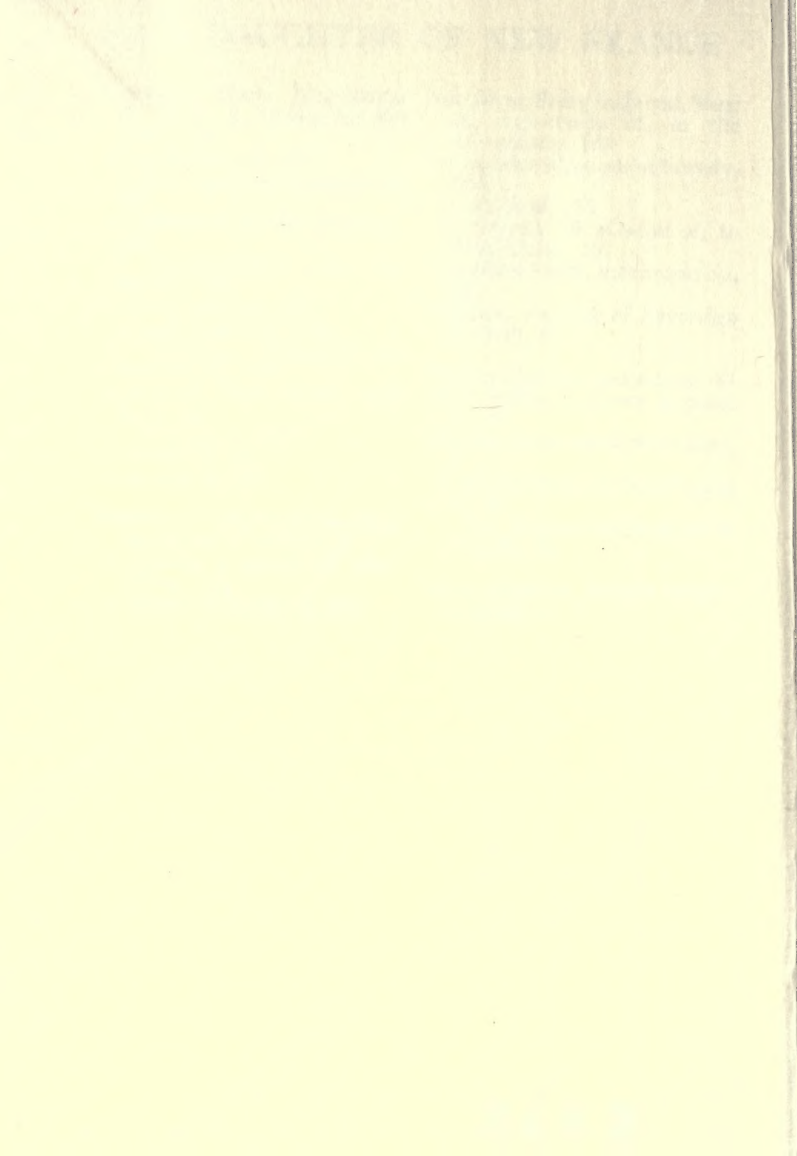
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